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Queen At 50

"I do take great joy in the fact that there's an awful lot of love for us still."

CAMERA PRESS / STEVE EMBERTON

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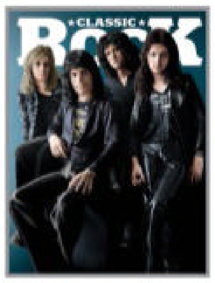
As milestones go, half a century is a bloody good one. And it's one that Queen were all set to celebrate in fine style in 2020. And then, y'know, 2020 happened. But as a very wise man once sang: '*The show must go on.*' So this issue we finally get to celebrate the glory and the majesty of the first 50 years of Queen by sitting down with the inimitable Dr Brian May and Roger Taylor for an in-depth conversation to reflect on their incredible story so far.

And while I don't really want to dwell on the fact that we're all back under lockdown in early 2021 (yeah, yeah, we know), it does seem like an opportune time to give a reminder that you can get *Classic Rock* delivered direct to your door (and save yourself some cash as well) by subscribing! See page 88 for more info.

Siân Llewellyn,
Editor



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This month's contributors

JERRY EWING
Launch editor Jerry Ewing has been involved with *Classic Rock* for so long he remembers the days when it was inscribed on tablets of stone. He grew up in Sydney, where aged nine he fell in love with AC/DC, and he still hasn't grown out of donning a schoolboy outfit and guitar. This issue he explores the story of Bon Scott's pre-'DC band Fraternity (p72).

DAVE EVERLEY
This is 'Diamond' Dave Everley's second *Classic Rock* cover story on the bounce. Last issue he cosied up with the Foo Fighters, and no sooner had the ink dried on that one than we dispatched him (well, got him on Zoom calls) with rock'n'roll giants Brian May and Roger Taylor of Queen to talk about the first half-century of one of the UK's best-ever bands (p36).

HENRY YATES
Henry Yates is a freelance journalist who has written about music for the *Guardian, Telegraph, NME, Guitarist, Total Guitar* and *Metal Hammer.* For this issue he sat down with the venerable Mick Fleetwood for The Classic Rock Interview (p56). For more from Henry, visit yatescreativecopywriting.com and follow @henryyates3 on Twitter.

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CRAZY CRAZY NIGHT!

With the biggest, brightest pyro display since Krakatoa and the Big Bang. Kiss blow 2020 into the stratosphere.

Photos: **Ross Halfin**

KISS SAID GOODBYE to 2020 with an explosive socially distanced New Year's Eve performance that broke Guinness world records for highest flame projection in a music concert (35 metres) and for most flame projections launched simultaneously (73). The eye-popping, ear-busting event, with ticket prices ranging from $39.99 to a $999 VIP package, took place at the Royal Beach hotel complex at Atlantis in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

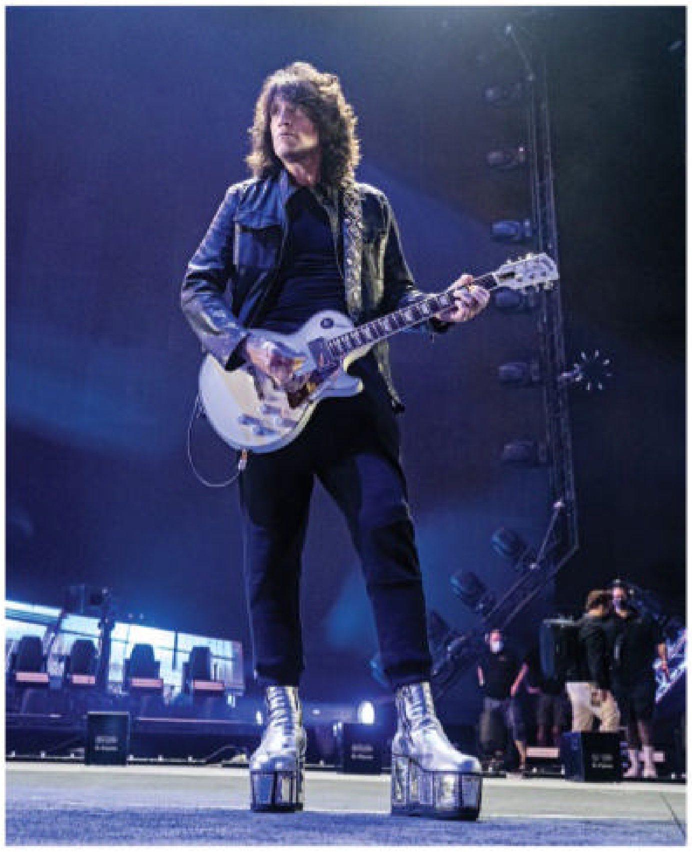
Kiss Bassist/vocalist Gene Simmons later revealed to the Oakland Free Press that the band had been told: "You can do anything you want here, no restrictions."

"And we said: 'Can we put on the biggest pyro show of all time, since Krakatoa and the Big Bang? We'll be safe going over there?' They said: 'Yeah.' So there you are."

Performed in front of a live, covid-19-screened audience, the $10 million spectacular, on a massive 250-foot stage, was shot with more than 50 cameras giving 360-degree views. While some fans watched from ground level, others watched from their hotel balconies.

The sole restriction Kiss faced was with lyrics. In Dubai, public swearing and vulgarity can result in up to a year in prison, so the words 'bitch' and 'virgin soul' were removed from *100,000 Years* and *God Of Thunder* respectively. **DL**

This month The Dirt was compiled by Lee Dorrian, Rob Hughes, Hannah May Kilroy, Dave Ling, Grant Moon, Johnny Sharp, Will Simpson



And God (or at least the God Of Thunder) said: "Let there be light!" And there was light. Oh *boy* was there light! But it's Kiss – what do you expect, a couple of spotlights and a box of sparklers?

Credit to photographer Ross Halfin, who captured the full, everything-on-11 visual extravaganza for *Classic Rock*, as you can see here and on the previous page.

Before putting on his flame-retardant suit and welding goggles to capture the full glare of the action, he also photographed the masked Kiss arriving in Dubai and later rehearsing on the huge stage at the Royal Beach hotel complex, (top left).

On this page and left it's Kiss in their pomp and in their element, all dressed up and putting on a show like no other. We're pretty sure that even Paul Stanley (top) and Gene Simmons (right), with all the shows they've played, have never before seen out a year with such a bang.

Wish you'd been there? So do we!

RIP

Thank you
and good night.

Steve Brown

Died January 2, 2021

English record producer Steve Brown has died aged 65 following an illness related to a fall in December. Brown worked with The Cult, Manic Street Preachers, Freddie Mercury, The Alarm, The Godfathers and Balaam And The Angel, among others. "We are deeply saddened to hear of the passing of legendary producer Steve Brown," The Cult said in a posting on social media.

Marsha Zazula

April 21, 1952 - January 10, 2021

Anthrax have paid tribute to Marsha Zazula, who along with her husband Johnny Z formed Megaforce Records, home to several influential metal acts including Metallica, Raven and King's X. A statement from Anthrax said: "The Zazulas were responsible for changing all our lives. It's hard to put into words their belief and dedication." The 68-year-old died of cancer.

Mark Keds

Died January 11, 2021

News of the death of Mark Keds, best known as the frontman with pop-punk band the Senseless Things, was broken by the group's guitarist Ben Harding. Cause of death hs not yet been announced. Keds also played with The Wildhearts, Jolt and, most recently, Tthe Deadcuts. "We love you, Mark. It seems clichéd to say 'gone too soon', but damn, he was only fifty," says Harding.

Charley Pride

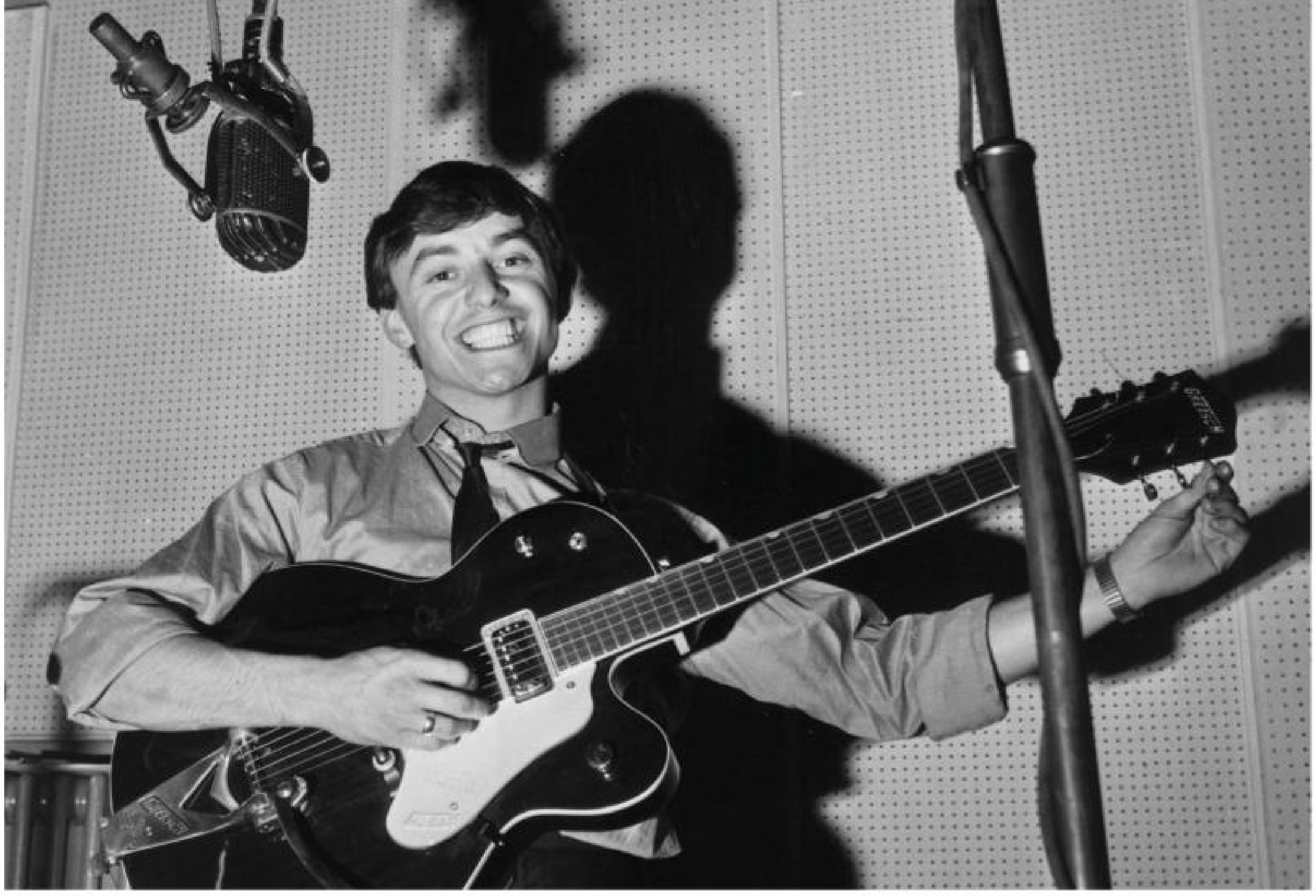
March 18, 1934 - December 12, 2020

A member of the Country Music Hall Of Fame, Charley Pride enjoyed a five-decade career and became the genre's first black superstar. "Charley's name was perfect," said singer-songwriter Don McLean. "He was proud, brave and a hell of a singer." Pride's death was due to complications from covid-19. He was 86.

Harold Budd

May 24, 1936 – December 8, 2020

The ambient music pioneer has died from complications due to the coronavirus, at the age of 84. Born in Los Angeles, Budd worked with Brian Eno, Robin Guthrie of the Cocteau Twins, Daniel Lanois, XTC and Jah Wobble, among others. Eno once said Budd was "a great abstract painter trapped in the body of a musician".



Gerry Marsden

September 24, 1942 – January 3, 2021

Gerry Marsden, who shot to fame in the early 1960s as the singer with Gerry And The Pacemakers, has died at the age of 78 following a short illness.

Liverpool-born Marsden was best known for the hit singles the group released in the early 1960s, when they became the first band to reach the top of the UK singles chart with each of their first three releases: *How Do You Do It?*, *I Like It* and the evergreen *You'll Never Walk Alone*

Originally from the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *Carousel*, Marsden's version of *You'll Never Walk Alone* was adopted by Liverpool FC as a terrace anthem in 1963, and has been associated with the club ever since. It has also been adopted by other groups of fans across Europe, including those of Celtic FC and Borussia Dortmund.

In 2013, Marsden recalled: "At Anfield, before every kick-off they used to play the Top Ten. I was at the game, and the fans started singing it. They were singing my song and it was great! When it went out of the Top Ten they took the song off the playlist, and then for the next match the Kop [one end of the ground] were shouting: 'Where's our song?' So they had to put it back on. Now, every time I go to the game I still get goose pimples when the song comes on, and I sing my head off."

Other hits by Gerry And The Pacemakers include *Don't Let The Sun Catch You Crying* and *Ferry Cross The Mersey*.

In 2003 Marsden was awarded an MBE for services to charity. After his death, Paul McCartney said: "See ya, Gerry. I'll always remember you with a smile." **FL**

Alexi Laiho

Announced January 4, 2021

The world of heavy metal was shocked and saddened by the unexpected death of Alexi Laiho, the former guitarist with Finnish band Children Of Bodom. Once hailed as "the mad scientist of modern metal" by *Classic Rock*'s sister title *Metal Hammer*, Laiho died of unknown causes between December 28 and January 3. He was 41 years old.

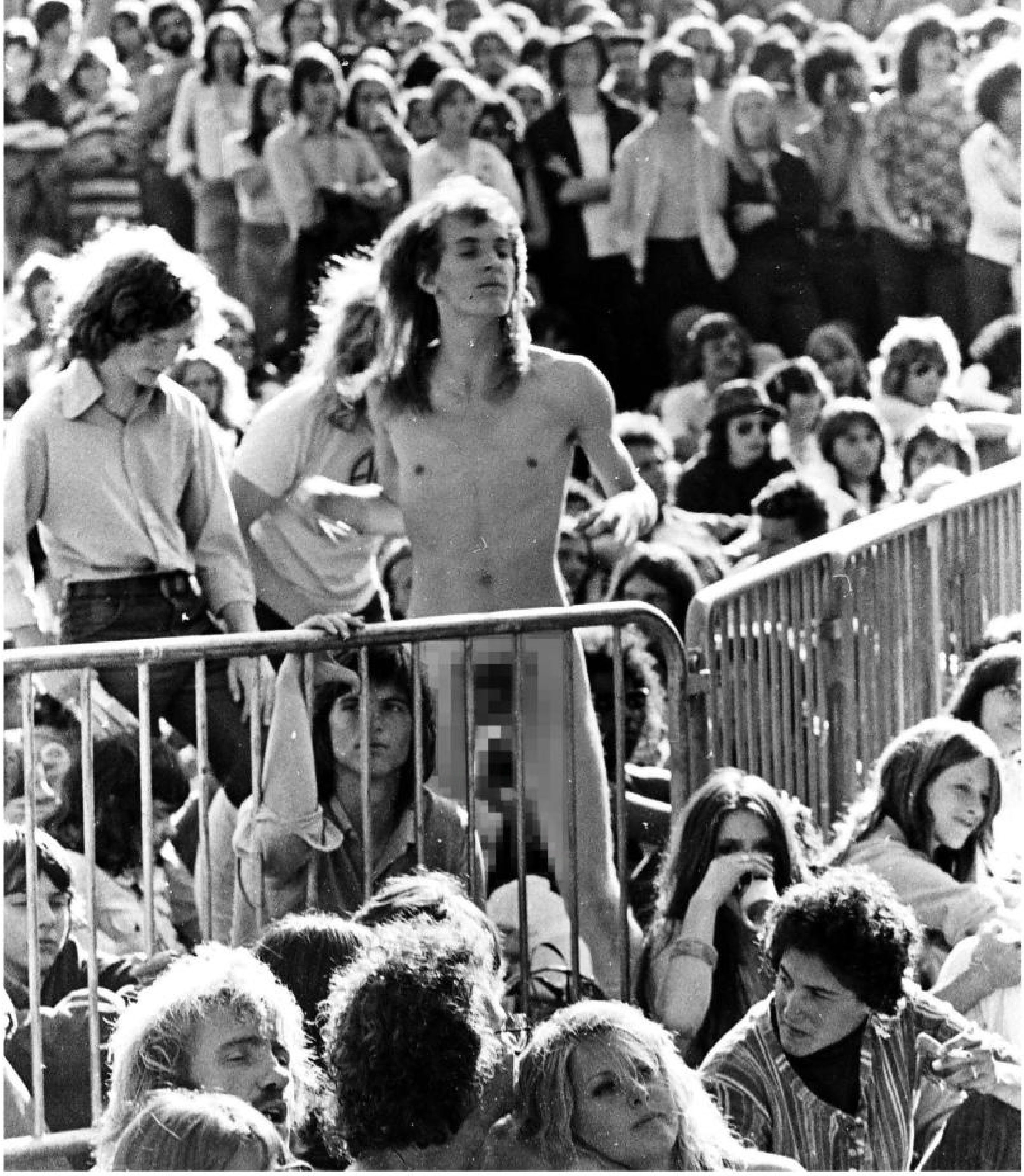
Nicknamed 'Wild Child', Laiho had been suffering with long-term health issues during his last years and passed away at home in Helsinki.

Along with drummer Jaska Raatikainen he founded Children Of Bodom in 1993. The band's fourth album, 2003's *Hatecrew Deathroll*, is regarded as a masterpiece that expanded the horizons of the metal genre. After Children Of Bodom's farewell concert in December of 2019, Laiho assembled Bodom After Midnight, who recorded three songs and shot one music video, now set to be released posthumously.

Fêted by musicians including Kerry King from Slayer and Metallica's Kirk Hammett, Laiho received the Dimebag Award for Best Shredder at *Metal Hammer*'s Golden Gods awards in 2008.

Megadeth's Dave Mustaine Tweeted: "So sad to hear about the passing of Alexi Laiho. We often toured together and he was truly an incredible talent." There were also plaudits from Marty Freidman, Herman Li of DragonForce and Nightwish's Floor Jansen. Guitar great Steve Vai described him as "a fiercely confident and monstrous guitar commander of the highest order". **DL**

GERRY MARSDEN: GETTY; ALEXI LAIHO: TERHI YLIMÄINEN



William 'Jesus' Jellett

June 6, 1948 - January 8, 2021

Better known as 'Jesus', William Jellett, the legendary UK music fan known for his frequently naked appearances at UK music festivals throughout the 1970s and 80s, has died at the age of 72.

The news was confirmed by Jellett's brother, Eric, who wrote: "William Jellett was born [in] Poole, Dorset, the youngest of four children. I am his brother and the eldest. I have not seen him for quite a while but one of my sisters has remained in contact with him.

"He has always remained in the London area but over the last few years he has not enjoyed the best of health, recently the decline was rapid. Last Friday my sister phoned to tell me that William had died peacefully in his sleep in a London hospital. He will be cremated and the family hope his ashes scattered at his favourite place: Speakers Corner [in London's Hyde Park]. I hope this clears up some of the confusion as who he was."

From the late 60s to the early 90s, Jellett was one of the most high-profile music fans in Britain, attending hundreds of concerts and music festivals and dancing wildly – in a manner often referred to at the time at 'idiot dancing' – to the music, adding tambourine, maracas or penny whistle as the mood took him. For many festival goers, a trip to Reading or Knebworth wasn't complete until 'Jesus' had been spotted.

He was first inspired by the Crazy World Of Arthur Brown, telling *NME*, "This guy was up there dancing about, like… and suddenly I just got up out of my seat and started dancing like I'd never danced before. And there are people looking at me as if to say I'm crazy."

Jellett can be seen in the film of Cream's farewell show at London's Royal Albert Hall in November 1968, dancing with his usual complete lack of abandon during *Sunshine Of Your Love*, and the film of Blind Faith's free concert in Hyde Park in June 1969, when DJ Jeff Dexter publicly referred to him as "Jesus" over the PA. He was also present during the filming of *The Rolling Stones Rock And Roll Circus* in '68.

The nickname stuck, and Jellett took it seriously, claiming to be the reincarnation of Jesus, showing scars on his palms that he claimed were stigmata, and setting up a 'Jesus tent' at the Glastonbury festival in 1973. He also became a regular at Speaker's Corner – a well-known site for public debate – where he preached about the importance of music and the dangers of drugs.

"I went to churches," he told *NME*. "I went to meetings. I went to lectures. And I was always ready to stand up and tell people what I'd found out. And you know how they reacted towards me? 'Go away, you're interfering.' That really hurt me. I was only trying to help them."

Jellett became so well-known that he regularly appeared on stage with bands – he can be heard playing penny whistle on Stray's *Live At The Marquee* album. On another occasion he infuriated 'Philthy Animal' Taylor by playing bongos during a Motörhead gig.

"Today we have heard the sad news that Jesus has passed away over the weekend," Stray wrote on Facebook. "His tireless energy dancing was always welcomed by bands and fans alike. We are sure that he will continue dancing forever now. God bless."

To the Pink Fairies, Jellett was known as 'The Egg Man'. "He was a big fan," said a posting from the band. "But then he was a big fan of almost everything."

"I was the piper at the gates of dawn," Jellett claimed on a flyer handed out at Speaker's Corner in 2000. "I was the piper in the stairway to heaven." **FL**

GETTY

Mick Bolton

Died January 1, 2021

Not to be confused with the ex-UFO guitarist of the same name, Mick Bolton, who played keyboards for Mott The Hoople, Dexy's Midnight Runners and Linda McCartney, among others, died in his sleep on New Year's Day at the age of 72. His Mott The Hoople bandmate Morgan Fisher praised him as "one of the sweetest of men, and a fine musician".

Keith Knowles

August 16, 1955 - December 31, 2020

Keith Knowles, the co-founding drummer with Liverpool-based hard rockers Marseille has succumbed to cancer. Marseille supported the likes of UFO, Judas Priest and Whitesnake during their original lifespan of 1976 to 1984, and Knowles played the band's first three albums. He also participated in a band reunion in the 00s.

Dieter Horns

February 28, 1946 - December 19, 2020

German hard rock band Lucifer's Friend have paid tribute to Dieter Horns, their drummer from 1970-'82 and 2014 onwards. "We celebrated fifty years as Lucifer's Friend this year and Dieter was there from the very beginning," said a statement. Horns died of age-related illnesses complicated by the coronavirus.

Sean Malone

April 12, 1970 – December 9, 2020

Paul Masvidal, guitarist with veteran US prog-metal band Cynic, said he was "numb and grief-stricken" at the passing of his bandmate, drummer Sean Malone, aged 50. Malone was also a member of the shifting-line-up prog supergroup Gordian Knot, which at various times also included Steve Hackett, Bill Bruford and Dream Theater's John Myung.

Alto Reed

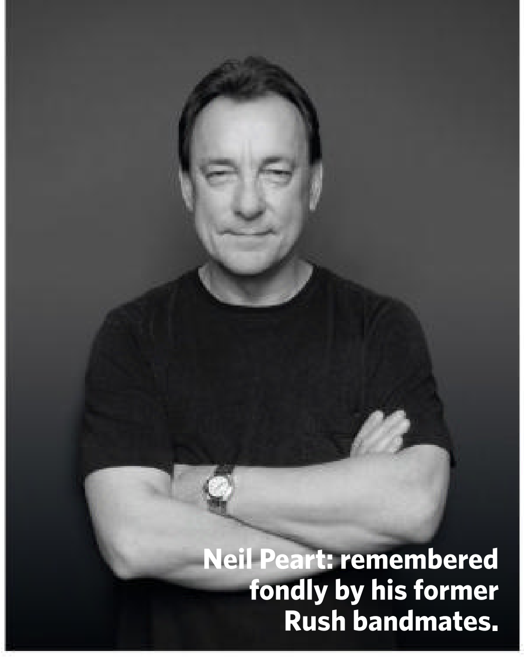
May 16, 1948 – December 30, 2020

Bob Seger is mourning his long-time Silver Bullet Band saxophonist Alto Reed, who has lost a battle with colon cancer. The 72-year-old Reed (born Thomas Neal Cartmell) spent almost 50 years playing alongside Seger, who commented: "Alto could play just about anything… he was funky, could scat, and play tenor sax and alto sax at the same time."

Jason Slater

March 8, 1971 – December 9, 2020

Hawaii-born Jason Slater was the co-founding bassist with San Franciscan rock band Third Eye Blind. After leaving that group he joined producer Eric Valentine in the formation of the industrial outfit Snake River Conspiracy. Slater also produced four albums by Queensrÿche. He died from liver failure. He was 49 years old.



Neil Peart: remembered fondly by his former Rush bandmates.

"After Neil died, music didn't seem important"

Alex Lifeson and Geddy Lee pay tribute on the first anniversary of Peart's death.

In an emotional interview with *Rolling Stone*, Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson have commemorated the first anniversary of the loss of their Rush bandmate Neil Peart, and reveal that the two of them have had little inclination to play music since Peart died from brain cancer on January 7, 2020.

"After Neil died it just didn't seem important," says guitarist Lifeson.

"For the longest time, I didn't have any heart to play," adds bassist/vocalist Lee. "I still feel there's music in me and there's music in Big Al, but there's no hurry to do any of that."

In August 2016, Peart learned that he had between 12 and 18 months to live. He shared the news with Lee and Lifeson in an email a couple of weeks later.

"I think I started crying right there," says Lifeson, who was on a golf course when he received the message.

Peart died more than three years after the initial diagnosis.

"Neil was a tough man," says Lee. "He was nothing if not stoic. He was pissed off, obviously. But he had to accept so much horrible shit. He got very good at accepting shitty news. And he was okay with it. He was going to do his best to stick around as long as he could, for the sake of his family. And he did unbelievably well. He accepted his fate, certainly more gracefully than I would have."

The lengthy story, which includes contributions from Peart's wife of 20 years Carrie Nuttall and long-time Rush manager Ray Danniels, paints a poignant picture of a very private individual. Providing a window into his final years, the level of detail is considerable. We learn, for example, that Peart never played drums again after Rush's final show, at the Forum in LA on August 1, 2015. Towards the end of his life he was confined to a wheelchair, but the rumour that he was unable to talk was false, friends say.

"I don't know what I will do again in music," Lee admits. "And I'm sure Al doesn't, whether it's together, apart or whatever. But the music of Rush is always part of us, and I would never hesitate to play one of those songs in the right context. But at the same time you have to give respect to what the three of us with Neil did together. I still am very proud of what we did." **DL**

NEWS

Ozzy Osbourne is close to completing his thirteenth solo album. As yet untitled, it features cameos from Metallica bassist Robert Trujillo and Foo Fighters drummer Taylor Hawkins. Producer Andrew Watt reveals: "Some songs are eight or nine minutes long. These really crazy journeys."

Glenn Hughes has admitted that he and fellow former **Deep Purple** member David Coverdale have a difficult relationship with the current line-up of the band. Although both were a part of Purple's induction into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 2016, Hughes says: "We just don't get along with the other guys, at all. Let's call it personality problems."

A double-disc expanded reboot of *Powertrippin'*, the third studio album from **The Almighty**, is released on February 26 via Cherry Red. Frontman Ricky Warwick recently revealed that the band, who had three periods of activity between 1988 and 2009, are to be the subject of career-spanning boxed set later in 2021.

Smith/Kotzen (pictured), the project featuring Iron Maiden guitarist Adrian Smith and guitarist/vocalist Richie Kotzen (the Winery Dogs and more), release their self-titled album on March 26 via BMG. The nine-track set was produced by Kevin Shirley and includes a guest appearance from Iron Maiden drummer Nicko McBrain on the track *Solar Fire*.

WELCOME BACK

W.E.T.

The mostly studio-based supergroup return with a new album, still aiming to keep melodic hard rock alive.

In the 12 years since Frontiers Records pulled them together, melodic hard rock supergroup W.E.T. – the one-time trio comprising Work Of Art keyboard player Robert Säll (whose group provide the name's 'W'), guitarist Erik Mårtensson from Eclipse ('E') and frontman Jeff Scott Soto of Talisman ('T') – have made four albums and evolved into a six-piece. With a new album, *Retransmission*, out, we caught up with Mårtensson.

With Jeff based in the States, and you and Robert in Sweden, how did you manage to make the album – and two videos – during a pandemic?
The videos were the hardest. Jeff shot his parts in Los Angeles and we did ours in Sweden, but we had to make it look like we were all together. We had to find locations that looked similar, though we froze our arses off in Sweden while Jeff was sweating in California.

"I didn't want [the new album] to sound like a record from 2021."

What's the breakdown of the roles within W.E.T.?
I'm the guy that makes everything happen. I've always been the main songwriter. Robert was more involved at the beginning, but that's okay. We're all very busy guys.

Things seem flexible. For example Robert takes the guitar solo on *Got To Be About Love*.
Robert plays two solos on this record. He's a great guitar player, of course he should play solos. We don't want him stuck behind the keyboards all the time.

And you trade lead vocals with Jeff on *Big Boys Don't Cry*.
We try to include one of those per record. It's a fun thing to do and it really breaks things up.

***Retransmission* seems a bit heavier than its predecessor, *Earthrage*?**
I think maybe it's more up-tempo. It's arena rock. For some people that's a bad thing, but I love it [laughs].

A great thing about *Retransmission* is that, contemporary production notwithstanding, it could have been made in any of the past three decades.
That's so great to hear. I didn't want it to sound like a record from 2021. It's just a good rock record; the type of thing you used to own on vinyl and still sounds great forty years later.

W.E.T. are more of a studio project than a live band. Does that frustrate you?
We've played only around six times, and of course that's boring. It's fun to make records, but playing the songs on stage really brings them to life. I wish we could do that more, but of course it's impossible at the moment. Actually, we are booking a tour for Eclipse in late 2021, so I really hope that happens.

Is there a new Eclipse album coming?
Yeah. We've been working on songs in lockdown. Most are at the demo stage. The recording begins in two months. It'll be an uplifting record. That's what everyone needs right now.

Melodic hard rock is no longer as fashionable as it once was. Were W.E.T. born twenty years too late?
[Laughs] Somebody has to be around to play this style of music now or it would be *completely* dead. But melodic rock will never go away, because the fans are so devoted to it. We don't do this to make money, we're here because we love it. **DL**

Retransmission is available now via Frontiers Records.

W.E.T.: TOMMASO BARLETTA/PRESS; SMITH & KOTZEN: JOHN McMURTRIE/PRESS

> "For me Tom Petty bridged the gap between country and rock'n'roll."

★ HIGH HOPES

Austin Meade

Meet the preacher's son with rock in his bones and a gift for telling stories that resonate.

MOST OF US owe something, at least, to our fathers. Austin Meade – a Texan singer songwriter who mixes a mean cocktail of alt.rock guitars, southern swagger and country-ish storytelling – owes more than most. For it was under his dad's tutelage that Austin was given a first-rate foundation course on the traditions, lores and legends of classic rock.

"He's the whole reason I got into music," he confirms. "He knows what song was released when, what album it came from and what the band line up was. Any time that there was a metal or classic rock show two or three hours drive of where we were, we would make a weekend trip. While all my friends were trying to get tickets for people like Lady Gaga, I'd be out there seeing Scorpions, Ratt, Whitesnake and Iron Maiden."

This is arguably even more unlikely when you consider that Meade Sr is a man of God. Austin is a real life son of a preacher man, one whose first gig was in his dad's Baptist church. "One week we needed someone to lead the music at the Sunday service," he remembers. "So he handed me the guitar on the Friday. I'm like 'wow I've got a couple of days to work out how to play an instrument that I've never played before'. I'm sure it was absolutely terrible but I sat down and kind of got into it."

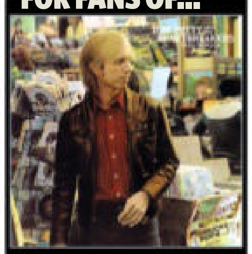
Years later Austin's playing has improved and he's developed a songwriting style that's built on highly relatable everyday scenarios. It feels very much like a product of his small town upbringing. There are definite nods in the direction of Springsteen and in particular Tom Petty (see box-out) on his upcoming new album *Black Sheep*, with its tales of childhood friends drifting apart (*Settle Down*), lovers in a less-than-satisfactory long distance relationship (*Happier Alone*) and non-specific small town ennui (the title track).

"Some of them are based on experiences in my own life where I'm trying to be honest with myself," he explains. "Others are me just saying things I want to say to close friends that I probably couldn't get to say in a regular conversation. But I think these are the same storylines that you'd find growing up in a big city. I don't want to be a songwriter that just simply writes about the small town. I want my ideas to be bigger than that."

Either way, it's an extremely accomplished album. And he's got one other important part of the package locked down: with his long flowing hair and 'tache, Meade looks every inch the early 70s rock star. "I kinda started growing it and then one thing led to another," he says sheepishly. "But I think it makes you feel good, makes you feel classic. I like how it makes me look like the artists I grew up listening to!" **WS**

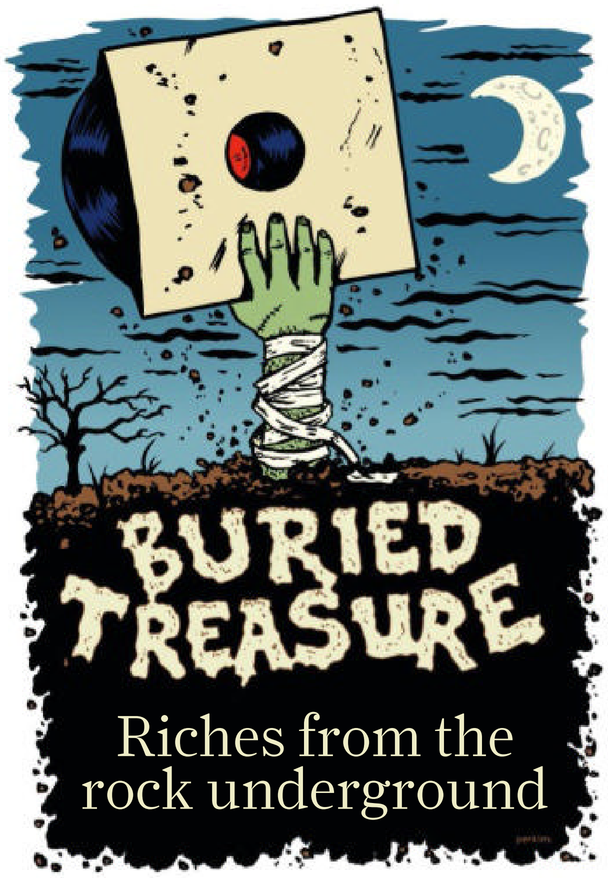
Black Sheep will be released on March 19 2021 via Snakefarm Records.

FOR FANS OF...



"Down here in Texas there's a lot of country as well as rock'n'roll," Austin says. "For me Tom Petty bridged the gap between those two worlds. I love the simplicity behind his songs, the way he can paint a picture and you feel as if you are in the room with him. The *Hard Promises* record has always been my favourite."

CHRIS KLEINMEIER/PRESS



PETE BROWN AND PIBLOKTO!

Thousands On A Raft, Harvest UK, 1970. £280+

Pete Brown is undoubtedly one of British rock music's unsung heroes. His literary talents as a poet caught the attention of Cream, and, mostly with with Jack Bruce, he co-wrote many of their timeless classics (*Sunshine of Your Love, White Room, I Feel Free*, to name just a few), before becoming the main lyricist for Jack Bruce on his debut solo album *Songs For A Tailor* in 1969. His collaborations with Bruce would continue for many years.

Encouraged by close friend Graham Bond, Brown put together Pete Brown And His Battered Ornaments in 1968. The band featured Chris Spedding on guitar and they recorded *A Meal You Can Shake Hands With In The Dark* for Harvest in 1969. Shortly after the follow-up was recorded, he was fired from his own band, the day before their highly prestigious slot at the infamous Stones In The Park gig. To add insult to injury, his vocals were erased from the recording and redone by Spedding.

'Mixing progressive hard rock with jazz and blues elements.'

Undeterred, he formed Piblokto and came back stronger, releasing two albums in 1970: *Things May Come And Things May Go But The Art School Dance Goes On Forever*, followed by *Thousands On A Raft*. It's an album brimming with ideas, mixing progressive hard rock with jazz and blues elements. Opener *Aeroplane Head Woman* is a Hammond/heavy guitar-led stormer, not too dissimilar to Atomic Rooster. *Highland Song* is a wah-wah-led instrumental suite, featuring stellar guitar from Jim Mullen. *If They Could See Me Now Parts 1-2* is a mini prog epic, while *Got A Letter From A Computer* seems to predict the future of email by several decades. **LD**

NEWS

The Black Crowes release an expanded, remastered, 30th-anniversary edition of their debut album *Shake Your Money Maker* on February 26 via American Recordings. It will be available in various formats.

Neil Young and **Lindsey Buckingham** are the latest musicians to sell shares of their music publishing catalogue to the intellectual property rights investor Hipgnosis Songs Fund. In a deal worth around £110 million, Young sold the company 50 per cent of the rights to his 1,180 self-written songs. For an undisclosed fee, Buckingham, who had previously sold a quarter-share of his songs, sold Hipgnosis the remainder, plus a 50 per cent stake of any future compositions.

Justin Hawkins is worried that the UK's entertainment industry may never recover following the destructive whirlwind of the coronavirus pandemic. "It doesn't seem like the arts are a priority any more," the frontman of The Darkness told the *Telegraph*. "It's really difficult to see a way back for music."

Mötley Crüe (pictured) are planning a year-long celebration of their 40th anniversary, which will include a North American stadium tour alongside Def Leppard, Poison and Joan Jett. The Crüe's Nikki Sixx and Tommy Lee first played together on January 17, 1981, and Mick Mars and Vince Neil joined them soon afterwards.

TOBIAS ANDERSSON/PRESS

WELCOME BACK

Transatlantic

The progressive supergroup's latest LP is so huge they had to name it twice (yes, really). Neal Morse fills us in.

If you like your prog rock grandly symphonic and whacked up to 11, then odds are you'll know Transatlantic. Comprising Neal Morse (Spock's Beard, Flying Colors), Mike Portnoy (Flying Colors, Sons Of Apollo), Pete Trewavas (Marillion) and Roine Stolt (The Flower Kings), they're the supergroup for whom more is definitely more. Their fifth album, *The Absolute Universe*, comes in a short version (subtitled *The Breath Of Life*) and a long one (*Forevermore*). Singer/keyboard player Morse explains.

There are sixty- and a ninety-minute variants of *The Absolute Universe*, and they're quite different too.

Yes. It was a creative decision for us. We couldn't come together as a band and decide which version was going to be the frontline one – we originally thought one would be a bonus disc for the other. Then Mike said: "Hey man, let's release it all!" in the Transatlantic tradition of doing grand, unprecedented things. So the name of the game then was to make them as different as we could. We started hacking up the master tape, playing with it in a big way – adding new choruses, lyrics and songs, cutting some fiddly bits and adding others. It was fun, really experimental.

"I'm very happy to continue as long as God gives me inspiration."

The lyrics refer a lot to darkness and light – they do seem to speak to our times.

We all wrote separately, but I think it all fit together in the end. I went through a period in my twenties when I got into [philosopher/novelist] Ayn Rand's 'virtue of selfishness'. I really thought I was something back then, thought I was Bowie's 'Naz'. But it made me negative and mean, it led me to a dark place. My first draft of lyrics was about that. Then the pandemic hit and I rewrote about the things going on in America – the protests, people getting arrested, the shutting down of [Morse's home town] Nashville.

There's some crazy playing on the record, and plenty of odd time signatures. Do you feel obliged to put these in because it's prog?

Funny you should mention that. I was at home with the family last night watching TV. I was jamming on the guitar, doing this riff in seven/eight, and my son said: "You just *think* in seven!" It just comes naturally to me. The stuff I listened to growing up – Genesis, ELP, Yes, even later Beatles – had odd time signatures.

You're all in several groups. Is that what you have to do to make a decent living in music these days?

I can't speak for the others, but for me, yes! To make ends meet, the way my wife and I live, I have to have several income streams. I have my label [Radiant], my streaming service [waterfallstreaming.com], fan subscription site [*Inner Circle*]. Music's a labour of love, and none of the prog stuff brings in enough money on its own. But I'm very happy to continue as long as God gives me inspiration for new albums. Creating is one of my favourite things to do in life.

You're known for your Christian faith. That must have helped you navigate the horrendous year we've had?

Oh, sure. It's a great comfort to know that God has a plan through everything that happens. We know we'll have tribulations in this world, but He will somehow make something good out of it all, even if a lot of times we cannot see how. **GM**

Both versions of The Absolute Universe are released on February 5 via InsideOut.

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ROMEO'S DAUGHTER
WARRIOR SOUL
THE CRUEL INTENTIONS
FIREROAD
HELL'S DITCH
THE CITY KIDS

SUNDAY
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WILDSTREET
DAXX & ROXANNE

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RICKY WARWICK & THE FIGHTING HEARTS
CONFESS
ANCHOR LANE
LYONESS
THE HOWLING TIDES
WICKED STONE

SATURDAY
TIGERTAILZ
THESE WICKED RIVERS
NEW DEVICE
SHE BURNS RED
TAKEAWAY THIEVES
SWEET TEAZE

SUNDAY
GLEN MATLOCK AND THE TOUGH COOKIES
JANUS STARK
THE HIP PRIESTS
COLT 45
SCRUFFY BEAR
GUTS

FOREST STAGE

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EY UP MAIDEN
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KICKIN VALENTINA
KING CREATURE
RXPTRS
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THIRTEEN STARS
DIG LAZARUS
CROOKED SHAPES
BASTETTE

SATURDAY
BLAZE BAYLEY
ABSOLVA
THE HERETIC ORDER
TORQUED
SKAM
ELEVATION FALLS
WOLVES AMONG US
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AND THE WINNER IS...

We asked you to vote for the Affinity Photo New Rock Photographer 2020. Here is your winner.

For the past 12 months, Louder (the online home of *Classic Rock*, *Metal Hammer* and *Prog* magazines) has been working with the folks at image-editing software Affinity Photo to find the best new rock photographers of 2020.

The competition ran throughout the year with a series of challenges – on live photography, crowd and venue scenes, mobile-phone photography, album art, promo shots and black-and-white photography – with a winner being chosen for each.

Last month the vote was held to choose the overall winner, and now we can reveal that the Affinity Photo New Rock Photographer 2020 is Dutch photographer Bert Treep, whose shot of prog singer Damian Wilson crowd-surfing impressed the judges and won the popular vote.

His photograph was taken in September 2019 at Arjen Lucassen's Into The Electric Castle Live at 013 in Tilburg, The Netherlands.

"The show was almost over and I was about to put my camera in the bag, when suddenly Damian Wilson jumped off the stage and started crowd-surfing from the front to the end of the venue," Bert told us. "The photo shows the moment he lands on the public for the first time with a big smile on his face.

"It was at the end of a phenomenal show. *The Electric Castle Live And Other Tales* is a rock opera written by Dutch master Arjen Lucassen. Damian Wilson was one of the original vocalists on *Into The Electric Castle* – he performed as the Knight (you can see the clothes on the picture)."

Many congratulations to Bert!

"THE SHOW WAS ALMOST OVER AND I WAS ABOUT TO PUT MY CAMERA IN MY BAG."

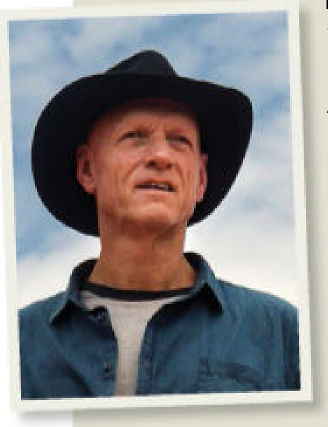
BERT TREEP

MY FIRST LOVE

John Mayall
THE BLUES ALONE
By Peter Garrett

The Midnight Oil mastermind on a John Mayall classic.

In Australia we had this thing called The Record Club. You could join it by paying, say, five dollars a month or something, and every month two or three records would be delivered.



I was fourteen or fifteen, and John Mayall's *The Blues Alone* was the first record I ordered. I don't even know why I ordered it, but I absolutely loved it. To this day I still love all his stuff. He had a lot of great musicians playing with him, a lot of great black musicians, although this was him playing nearly everything.

He did so much for the blues revival around that time. Hearing him led me on to stuff like The Yardbirds and Cream. I always remember him, though, because unlike most big musicians he came to Australia. Not just for a gig, either. It was 1972, I was a law student at Canberra University, and he and his band showed up and did a music workshop. There were only about twenty people there. I was sat in the front row. It was a life-changing moment! The fact that he sat down with us was so inspiring. Freddie Robinson was the guitar player, who I loved. There's these A-grade Chicago blues musicians in front of a bunch of pasty faced colonial Australian kids going: "What the…?" **JS**

Midnight Oil's The Makarrata Project is out now via Sony.

NEWS

Sammy Hagar says he is grateful to have buried the hatchet with Edward Van Halen shortly before the latter's death last October. "Poor Eddie. Thank God we connected before [he passed]," Hagar told *Variety*. "I said: 'I love you, man', and it was like, boom, we were good. It was a beautiful thing."

Geddy Lee is to be a guest musician at the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra's virtual event *The Show Must Go On: Stories Of Resilience* on February 18. Lee's role in the ticketed show is yet to be confirmed. Tune in to the VSO's website at 6.30pm local time (that's 10.30am in Britain) to find out.

A six-episode mini-series about Sex Pistols guitarist **Steve Jones**, based on his 2018 memoir *Lonely Boy: Tales From A Sex Pistol*, is to be made by American company FX Entertainment. Twenty-six-year-old Australian actor Toby Wallace will take the title role.

Sheffield band **Black Spiders**, who broke up in 2017, are back with a self-titled full-length album on March 26 via Dark Riders Records. It's their first with new drummer Wyatt Wendels.

Slash (pictured) has cautiously teased the possibility of a new Guns N' Roses record later this year. He hopes to make two albums in 2021, one in partnership with Myles Kennedy And The Conspirators, the other from separate jam sessions with Axl Rose and Duff McKagan.

ADAM KENNEDY/PRESS

WELCOME BACK

Walter Egan

The West Coast/Americana crossover artist has a new album, based on ex-super-groupie Pamela Des Barres.

Best known for 1978's mega-selling hit *Magnet And Steel*, featuring Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks on backing vocals, American soft-rocker Walter Egan has been covered by Gram Parsons, sampled by Eminem and, for a brief period in the 90s, was the bassist with Spirit. He has also released more than a dozen solo albums, the latest being *fascination*, a collection of songs centred on author and ex-super-groupie Pamela Des Barres. Needless to say, we're intrigued.

How did you get to know Pamela Des Barres?
I met her when she was having a yard sale a few years ago. I was divorced, living the bachelor life, and developed a crush on Pamela from that first meeting. So I started writing songs about my feelings. You can trace the exact arc of my infatuation on *fascination*.

> "She [Stevie Nicks] won my heart. We went out a few times."

***fascination* sounds like a document of a fantasy relationship.**
I think everyone can relate to it as far as unrequited love goes. Some of the best songs are about unrequited love, like *Magnet And Steel*. I guess that's the story of my life!

Do you know how Pamela feels about the album?
She told me they were the best songs I've ever written, though I'm not sure if she's the most credible source. In some ways it's akin to my relationship with the UK. Somehow I didn't catch on there. I came over to Britain in January seventy-nine and played at The Venue [in London's Victoria]. It seemed like the interviewers were subtly hostile towards me, because I was suntanned and from California. It was still the punk attitude: "How dare you have a tan. And why are you writing happy songs?"

How did *Magnet And Steel* come about?
I wrote it when I was working on my first album [1977's *Fundamental Roll*], which was recorded with Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks. Columbia had given me a record deal after playing a hoot night at the Troubadour in LA, and my engineer suggested them as producers. They were also recording *Rumours*. And Stevie, of course, was something I hadn't anticipated. She won my heart early in that process and we went out a few times. The dynamic between her and Lindsey was a bit touchy at the time.

Did Stevie welcome that song?
She was sufficiently touched by *Magnet And Steel*, and having her sing on it made it magical. But she also realised, as I did, that it would work against our project for us to start some sort of romance in the middle of making this album.

Did California feel like the ideal environment for you back then?
Hearts On Fire [covered by Gram Parsons] was my calling card when I moved out there from Boston in 1974. I already knew Don Henley and Glenn Frey from playing the East Coast with Linda Ronstadt. And I knew Bernie [Leadon] was leaving the Eagles, so I actually wrote them a letter, saying I was available if they wanted me. Glenn met me at the Troubadour and told me they already had someone. He put his arm around me: "Man, don't worry about it. You're going to make it." That was a special moment. Moving to California was such a great adventure. The rest of my career led out of that decision. **RH**

fascination is released on February 5 via Red Steel Music. Reissues of Mad Dog, The Meaning Of Live, Walternative and Apocalypso Now are also available.

★ HIGH HOPES

Mason Hill

It's been a long time coming, but these young Scots are ready to rock and conquer.

There aren't many kids who can say they've shared a stage with a guitar legend. James Bird can, having performed live with Zakk Wylde when he was just ten years old. These days he plays with his own band, Mason Hill – Scotland's rising stars of contemporary, muscular hard rock – but the experience has stayed with him.

"I had long hair and a leather waistcoat, and I was obsessed with Zakk Wylde," the guitarist laughs. "His tour manager saw me playing at a musical event in Birmingham, and invited me to go meet him. I was watching from side-stage, somebody pushed me on, and Zakk handed me a guitar. It was amazing. I'm glad there's video footage, because it's hard to properly remember!"

A few years later, Bird met his future Mason Hill bandmate, vocalist Scott Taylor, at school in Glasgow, where they were in a music class together. They started out playing a somewhat heavier style than the one they peddle today: "We were proper metalheads," says Bird, "spotty teenagers with hair over our eyes!" Their early band, Black Velvet, won the Scottish section of [European battle of the bands competition] Surface Festival in 2012, taking them to London to play the final at the Indigo O2. It didn't go to plan, however, which turned out to be a wake-up call.

"We played against the other winners, and we were just not good in comparison," Bird says. "It was a make-or-break moment," Taylor adds. "Did we want to be a professional band, or not?"

They decided they did, and formed Mason Hill proper in 2013, bringing in Craig McFetridge on drums, who they found on Gumtree (bassist Matthew Ward and guitarist Marc Montgomery would join later). They started to develop their own style – think Black Stone Cherry-meets-Alter Bridge – and played live as much as possible, releasing an EP in 2015. In 2018 they signed to Frontiers Records, but ended up parting with the label before the album was released. "That delayed things, but we learned from it," Taylor says. "It made us look at the songs, and think about how we could improve them."

Fast-forward to the present, and their debut LP *Against The Wall* is finally set for release. According to Taylor and Bird it's all the better for the delay, and as titles like *No Regret*, *Find My Way* and *Where I Belong* suggest, it's a reflection of how they found their feet.

"Some songs were started back when we were teenagers, but it was a big journey to get to the point where they were finished," Bird says. "We ended up working with Brian Sperber, who's worked with Alter Bridge. We became better songwriters."

"We are a guitar-driven band, but we also wanted to bring in more modern elements," Taylor explains. "This album's not like a normal album that's been a year of a band's life: it's like a life journey of our music career up until now." **HMK**

Against The Wall is out on March 5 via 7Hz Recordings.

FOR FANS OF...

"Alter Bridge's *Blackbird* got us to focus on showing diversity, that we can be a heavy band but also give you a slower song, all packaged into one album so that no song is the same as the last. You'll slow down for *Where I Belong*, but be ready to be smashed in the face by *DNA* and *Find My Way* right after."

MICHAEL BRUCE/PRESS

"We are a guitar-driven band, but we also wanted to bring in more modern elements."

Accept

I'm A Rebel

How the German heavy metallers took a glam-rock-tinged stomper – a long-lost early AC/DC track written by Malcolm and Angus's brother Alex – and made it their own.

Words: **Dave Everley**

As 1979 drew to a close, Accept were in need of a hit. The scrappers from the then West German city of Solingen dreamed of following in the footsteps of fellow countrymen the Scorpions and busting their hi-octane metal beyond the boundaries of their home country. The problem was that their self-titled debut album, released earlier that year, had fallen on deaf ears.

"It was not an overnight success, by any means," says Accept's longtime guitarist Wolf Hoffmann. "It was kind of so-so, stylistically. Everybody made it clear to us that in order to be successful you had to be played on the radio. Our label said: 'Maybe you should try to use an outside songwriter, cos you guys aren't great at it.'"

Hoffmann and his bandmates were pragmatic enough to put pride aside and agree to the idea. And it didn't take long for a prime candidate to land in their lap.

"Our music publisher, Rudi Holzhauer, said: 'I've got this song that might fit you guys. It's catchy, it's heavy, and it was written for AC/DC,'" says Hoffmann.

The song was a raucous glam-rock-tinged stomper titled *I'm A Rebel*, written by Alex Young, elder brother of Angus and Malcolm Young, and a former member of late-60s C-listers Grapefruit. AC/DC had recorded their own version three years earlier, but it never saw the light of day.

The roots of this 'lost' AC/DC track go back to an impromptu drunken session on the outskirts of Hamburg. Holzhauer, who worked for German publishers Schacht Music, had recently taken on the then relatively unknown Australian band. When they played a gig at Hamburg's Fabrik club on September 15, 1976, he went to check them out. "After the gig, we asked them to record a song for us," Holzhauer told Hamburg newspaper *Morgenpost* in 2001.

Holzhauer knew Alex Young, who was living in the city at the time. The song he wanted AC/DC to record was *I'm A Rebel*, written by the elder Young – an obvious choice, given the family connection.

The following evening, Angus, Malcolm and Bon Scott turned up at Studio Maschen. Holzhauer was there, as was engineer Jurgen Magnus, and Alex Young. "They recorded the song in a few hours," Holzhauer later recalled.

Specific details of the session remain murky, as most of the people involved are now dead. But it seems the band were unhappy with the track. Perhaps it veered too close to glam-rock, or maybe their drunken antics in the studio sounded a lot less professional in the cold light of day.

Hoffmann disagrees. "It was awesome," the guitarist says of the demo he heard. "It was pretty authentic. It sounded exactly like you'd imagine – like AC/DC."

Three years after that session, Accept had few qualms about covering this lost gem on their second album, also eventually titled *I'm A Rebel*. "We were a little bit sceptical, because we had never used anybody else's song before – or since, as a matter of fact," says Hoffmann. "But we realised the song was really good and really catchy, and it would maybe open the door for radio stuff. And it wasn't like they were the mega band in those days that they are today. It wasn't supposed to be a big deal. It was just a song we put on the album."

Accept recorded their version in late 1979, with producer Dirk Steffens, and Alex Young was initially involved in the sessions. "He came out to the recording studio. He wanted to try his hand at producing us," says Hoffmann. "We didn't get along with him. I remember him being a little pushy and arrogant."

Accept's version of *I'm A Rebel* was released in early 1980 as the first single from the album. Credited to 'George Alexander' (a pseudonym for Alex Young), it bristled with the same glam-rock energy as the original AC/DC demo, while vocalist Udo Dirkschneider sounded uncannily like Bon Scott. "Our version was nowhere near as good as theirs," Hoffmann says with a laugh. "Come on, it was AC/DC."

The original recording of *I'm A Rebel* has never officially been released, although a leaked version of the song has been in circulation on the internet for years. The latter features Alex Young on vocals, prompting some AC/DC historians to suggest that Bon Scott didn't sing on the original. Hoffmann shoots that idea down.

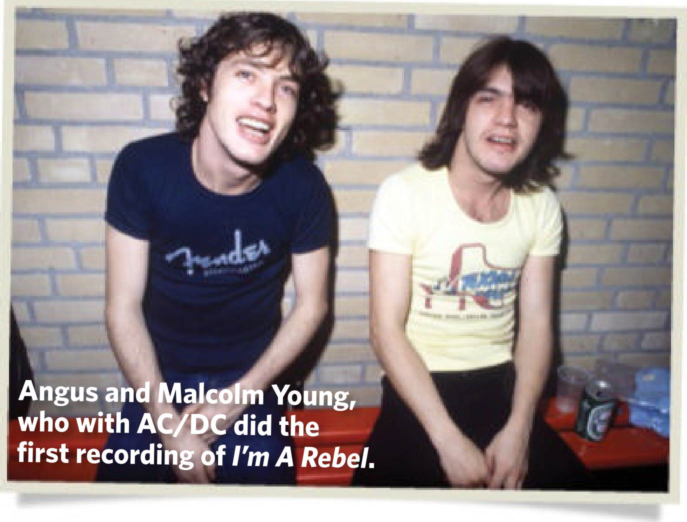
"Our version was nowhere near as good as [the original]. Come on, it was AC/DC."

"It was Bon," he insists. "I'll tell you how I know. Rudi Holzhauer, who suggested it to us, came to one of our shows eight or nine years ago, before he died. I asked him if he still had that original tape. He had it on his phone. We were all huddled round his iPhone, listening to the AC/DC version with Bon singing. It was amazing."

Accept's *I'm A Rebel* never did give them the breakthrough hit they needed (that came a couple of years later with 1982's *Restless And Wild* album and its immortal proto-thrash anthem *Fast As A Shark*).

As for AC/DC's original demo, it remains tantalisingly unheard, gathering dust in the vaults of a Hamburg publishing company. And given the band's iron grip on their legacy, that's probably where it will remain.

Accept's new album Too Mean To Die is out now via Nuclear Blast.



Angus and Malcolm Young, who with AC/DC did the first recording of *I'm A Rebel*.

WOLF'S PACK STILL HUNTING

Wolf Hoffmann is the only member of Accept's classic 80s line-up left in the band. "I never expected to be the last man standing," he says. "It feels weird, but that's the way it is."

The band's new album, *Too Mean To Die*, is their fifth with singer Mark Tornillo, who replaced original squawker Udo Dirkschneider when Accept reunited in 2009. It was recorded partly before the pandemic, and finished remotely.

"It could go either way," is Hoffmann's expectation. "We're not touring, so it could hurt it. On the other hand, people are stuck at home and they're desperate for some fresh heavy metal."

THE FACTS
RELEASE DATE
1980
HIGHEST CHART POSITION
N/A
PERSONNEL
Udo Dirschneider
Vocals
Wolf Hoffmann
Guitar
Jörg Fischer
Guitar
Peter Baltes
Bass
Stefan Kaufman
Drums
WRITTEN BY
'George Alexander' (aka Alex Young)
PRODUCED BY
Dirk Steffens
LABEL
Brain Metronome GmbH

Smile like you mea... Oh, forget it.

Q&A

Ricky Warwick

The Black Star Riders frontman on his new solo album, his debt to Thin Lizzy, and Joe Elliott telling him how to sing.

Interview: **Mick Wall**

Perched in his LA lockdown den, in remarkably youthful good health and looking only half his 54 years, Ricky Warwick is breaking all the rules of rock stardom. He is also about to release *When Life Was Hard And Fast*, the best solo album of his career so far. That is clearly not how these things work usually, saving all your best stuff for long after you've become famous. In Warwick's case fame came first with his band The Almighty, who started out in 1988, then latterly fronting Black Star Riders with former Thin Lizzy star Scott Gorham. But that's how Ricky likes to roll, going against the grain, full of surprises.

How has lockdown been for you?
In LA it's really bad again. They're doing ICUs [intensive care units] in the car parks of hospitals. I lost my mum last year and I couldn't fly back to Scotland for the funeral. Everything we used to take for granted is fucked. When it's over I think it's going to be a very different world. I don't know if that's going to be a good or a bad thing.

Is *When Life Was Hard And Fast* one of those albums that should have come out in 2020?
The album was recorded in April 2019, and we always planned to put it out in early 2021. Black Star Riders were supposed to be playing everywhere in 2020; we had just released *Another State Of Grace* right before Christmas. We got one tour of Europe in, then this year was supposed to be festivals, South America, the States, Asia… Sadly we had to write that off. But we're kinda sticking to the plan we'd already come up with, which is my solo record comes out in early 2021, and I hopefully try and tour and promote it this year.

How different was *Another State Of Grace* compared to the BSR album, which you recorded after the solo album?
When I'm writing something for BSR I'm very aware that Scott and the other guys have their input. That's brilliant. But with the solo record there are no limitations. Also it's good to step outside your comfort zone and work with other people. Plus I get to play much more guitar, which is good. With guitar players like Christian Martucci and Scott Gorham, your guitar chances are limited. Whether it's BSR, whether it's Ricky Warwick, I love to create and be in the studio. I've had a few raised eyebrows from Scott Gorham when I've played him something, like: "Really? You didn't bring this in for us?"

I don't feel I'm selling anybody short. I'm coming up with enough ideas to feed the BSR machine and my own solo stuff. I made it clear to Scott when we started Lizzy back up and morphed into BSR that I wasn't gonna give the solo thing up, and he was totally cool with it. Everybody in BSR is involved in other stuff outside the band. Christian's very involved in Corey Taylor and his solo stuff, Robbie [Crane, bassist] has got stuff going on, Scott's got the Lizzy thing, which thankfully I'm involved in too, which is amazing.

Writing and co-producing it with [former Buckcherry guitarist] Keith Nelson was really gratifying, having a kindred spirit and somebody with great chemistry, and a blue-collar working-class upbringing like myself, and a great work ethic, it was a joy to make.

Your punk influences are still there on the new album. But the singing and writing seems a bit more cinematic. Is that the Lizzy-BSR influence?
The opportunity to do the Thin Lizzy thing and the success we've had with BSR, it's been the best education I've had. I'm a better singer, a better writer, a better guitar player because of Phil [Lynott] and Scott. Because of the enormity of what it was to sing all of the boys' songs I had to fucking step up my game, really put the hours in. Never played guitar more, never written more. I studied stagecraft, relearning a lot of stuff, and a lot of people helped me. It really started with Joe Elliott on the first solo record [2003's *Tattoos & Alibis*], when he said: "You don't need to shout. Use your voice. Sing!" That was the best advice I ever got.

With most songwriters, by the time they get out of their twenties the good stuff has all been done. But you're actually getting better. What's the secret?
I'm even more excited about everything than I was when I was fourteen and first picking up the guitar. I'm very aware that the clock is ticking, and I'm just enjoying writing. I'm really inspired. I've got a lot to say. I'm in a better head space. I'm looking after myself. I don't really drink much these days. I run, I'm trying to live a chilled life. I'm trying to cut out the stress – as much as you can when you have kids. Just trying to enjoy the time I have left and be as creative as I can in that period of time, while I'm still physically able to do it.

As well as the rockers, you have some wonderful ballads too. Are they autobiographical?
Yeah, there's a lot of four a.m. thoughts. I express myself way better in songs than I do in any other format. A song like *I Don't Feel At Home* was written about one of my family's struggles with heroin addiction, his hollowed-out life. Then there's *Time Don't Seem To Matter*, which I wrote about my youngest daughter, Pepper, and which she sings on. It's about being away from her, and missing the birthdays and the school plays. It's the one downside of what we do.

The Celtic heart has tales to tell.
I love a good party song with cheesy lyrics. There's certainly a place for that. But the people who inspire me are the storytellers. Obviously Phil was amazing at that, Joe Strummer too. Springsteen's amazing, Dylan… All those guys are not only great singers and musicians, they are great storytellers. They suck you in. I keep going back to Phil and Lizzy, such great music and stories. Those songs were the soundtrack of my youth growing up in Northern Ireland. Jake Burns from Stiff Little Fingers was another guy singing about my feelings being thirteen years old in fucking East Belfast with the Troubles going on, and nothing to do. He was nailing it. That's my life – those stories. If I can inspire a similar feeling in some kids today, I'll be happy.

When Life Was Hard And Fast is released on February 19 via Nuclear Blast.

Ricky Warwick: enjoying a late-career purple patch.

"I'm enjoying writing. I'm really inspired. I've got a lot to say. I'm in a better head space."

Cats In Space

They embrace the 70s, are wary of the 'business', and reckon there are lots of potential fans out there.

Interview: **Dave Ling**

FIVE YEARS AGO a group of musicians with links to T'Pau, Gillan, Sweet, Airrace, Asia, Mike Oldfield and others set the controls of the time machine for the 1970s, and set out to restore that era's gigantic choruses, loud guitars, wall-of-sound harmonies and grandiose pianos with support slots with Status Quo, Deep Purple and Thunder.

With album number four, *Atlantis*, recently released, we spoke to guitarist Greg Hart about Cat life so far.

Cats In Space were born because their style of music wasn't being played by anyone else.
"It happened by complete accident," Hart explains. "I was writing songs with Mick Wilson [of 10cc] purely for our own entertainment. Outside of The Darkness, nobody made that kind of classic retro-rock any more. It could have been a very expensive ego trip, but the reviews of the first album, *Too Many Gods*, made us realise that we were on to something."

***I Fell Out Of Love With Rock'N'Roll*, the first single from the new album, is a true story.**
Hart believes that rock music "went wrong" in 1992. "I agree that something needed to happen to counter the waves of horrendous, diluted hair-metal bands," he admits. "But for me, grunge was every bit as contrived in its own way."

The only bands from the 1990s and beyond that Hart has serious time for are US 90s power-poppers Jellyfish (somewhat reborn when in 2017 three original members joined forces as The Lickerish Quartet) and, surprisingly, Scottish alt. rockers Del Amitri.

The latest addition to the line-up, Damien Edwards, is the third lead singer they've had in 14 months.
After original frontman Paul Manzi left to join Sweet, in May 2019 the Cats brought in Mark Pascall, who elected to share his time between Cats and his other group, Departed. Pascall left after the festive single *My Kind Of Christmas*.

"I'm not dissing Mark, but he didn't really share our work ethic," Hart reveals. "Also, there was a twenty-year age gap between him and the rest of the band. We're in the last-chance saloon here,

Cats In Space: optimistic, but with enough experience to remain down-to-earth.

and it's a bloody good saloon to be in. But for me, Deano [Howard, guitar], Jeff [Brown, bass], Andy [Stewart, keyboards] and Steevi [Bacon, drums], Cats In Space is our main priority. In the end we were like oil and water."

Edwards came from the world of theatre.
Prior to joining the Cats In Space, Damien Edwards sang in various theatre productions and was a part of the touring version of *War Of The Worlds*.

"Damien is not one to boast of his achievements," Hart insists, then says with a laugh: "If I had half of his talent I'd be the biggest gobshite ever. He sings better than anyone I've ever worked with. His acting is a bonus, because Cats In Space songs require a certain jazz-hands approach."

Cats In Space embrace the DIY model, which has paid dividends.
The band now handle their own management and self-release all their music. They also commission the artwork and run their website and socials. They consider it to be worth the effort.

"Artists don't realise that record companies are just banks that loan you money and then take it back at vast levels of interest. Why bother with them any more?" Hart muses. "We have complete artistic freedom. The only downside is that a band like ours cannot bully its way into certain key areas, so we rely on goodwill, but it has worked well this far. Our motto is: 'Build it and they will come'. Give the fans something bright and shiny to look at, and sell it at a reasonable price."

They continue to find their way into the lives of delighted new admirers.
Hart believes that, five years into their existence, the band have barely scratched the surface of the consciousness of what he terms "the grey-haired, fifty-something rock fan" – the type of music connoisseurs that thought a band such as CIS long-extinct.

"Traffic at our website and touring with Purple and Quo taught us that there are millions of those people around the world. If we can manage to tap in to one per cent, then we'll have the best career ever," he adds, smiling like the proverbial feline. "That's our goal."

Atlantis is out now via Harmony Factory.

LESLIE WEST

October 22, 1945 – December 23, 2020

Having made his name in the early 70s with Mountain, as a guitarist he was praised by many of his peers, Jeff Beck once describing him as "the greatest living guitarist in the world".

Words: **Dave Ling**

Some of the biggest names in rock music have paid tribute to Leslie West, the guitarist and vocalist who made his name in the early 70s with pioneering New Yorkers Mountain. West died following a cardiac arrest at his home near Daytona, Florida. He was 75 years old.

Best known for their 1970 hit *Mississippi Queen*, covered by artists as diverse as Ozzy Osbourne and Bachman-Turner Overdrive, Mountain made their mark at the Woodstock Festival in 1969, and went on to become one of the biggest attractions of the early 70s. Their heavy, sludgy blues served as a template for heavy metal. After a combination of rock-star extravagance, drugs and rampant egos broke up the band after just three albums, the last being 1971's *Flowers Of Evil*, West and Mountain drummer Corky Laing formed the power trio West, Bruce And Laing with ex-Cream bassist/vocalist Jack Bruce.

Born Leslie Weinstein, West's music career began when he joined Long Island rock'n'soulers The Vagrants after buying an electric guitar with the proceeds from his bar mitzvah. The Vagrants were produced by Felix Pappalardi, who had overseen Cream's *Disraeli Gears* in 1967. Pappalardi produced West's solo debut, *Mountain*, in '69, and went on to become the bassist with the band of the same name.

While they were recording at the Record Plant, Jimi Hendrix paid them a visit. "Jimi said he loved the riff to *Never In My Life*. That kind of acknowledgement made me feel like hot shit – I stopped talking to all of my friends," West would later joke.

The success of *Mississippi Queen* saw Mountain take off like a rocket. Their formula was simple: a mix of power and subtlety delivered in stripped-down form. "I didn't play fast, I only used the first and the third finger on the fingering hand," West said in 2011. "I wanted to have the greatest, biggest tone, and I wanted vibrato like somebody who plays violin in a hundred-piece orchestra."

West's undoubted prowess as a player and writer – Jeff Beck once called him "the greatest living guitarist in the world" – served to overshadow another talent: his gruff yet soulful voice was every bit as striking as the riffs that served as the focal point.

Leslie West was a *big* man. When he was playing with The Vagrants, wearing a feathered cape on stage, promoter Bill Graham likened him to a "three-hundred-pound psychedelic canary".

"My weakness was cakes and pastries," West offered. "Eventually they made me diabetic. I bought Krispy Kreme donuts by the dozen. When I'd finished the box I'd lick the glaze out of the bottom."

"Jimi Hendrix said he loved the riff to *Never In My Life*. That kind of acknowledgement made me feel like hot shit."

Leslie West

Although he made a rod for his own back by titling his 1975 solo *The Great Fatsby*, West became frustrated when his physical size was the subject of more column inches than the music he made. The efforts of his label didn't help.

"RCA Records came up with the brilliant idea of putting scales in the lobby of the Beacon Theater and inviting fans to guess my weight," he recalled through gritted teeth. "I almost threw the goddamn thing through the doors and out on to Broadway."

In '71 The Who invited West to appear on their album *Who's Next*. "Pete [Townshend] wanted me to play lead guitar, and my reply was: 'What's the matter with him playing it?' But he only wanted to play rhythm," West later explained. The results surfaced belatedly on an expanded edition of the album released in the 90s. ▷

GETTY

Gibson

The classic four-piece Mountain circa 1970: (l-r) Corky Laing, Leslie West, Steve Knight, Felix Pappalardi.

"I'm a lucky sonofabitch to have been alongside Leslie during some brilliant moments that our final falling out could never erase."

Corky Laing

Many people forged an association with Mountain unknowingly, via a powerful snippet of the title track from their second album, *Nantucket Sleighride*, which was used as a theme tune to ITV's political show *Weekend World*. The band knew nothing of this until they supported the newly reunited Deep Purple at Knebworth Park in 1985. "A hundred thousand people started going crazy for *Nantucket Sleighride*, I couldn't understand how they knew it," West marvelled years later.

Over the years, Mountain would flit in and out of existence, West as the band's curator, largely with Laing in tow. For a while West even stopped playing. It was seeing Eddie Van Halen for the first time that rejuvenated him to pick up a guitar again. The pair went on to develop a close friendship.

Felix Pappalardi was out of Mountain's line-up when his wife Gail Collins shot and killed him in 1983. West and Laing were on their way to a gig in Indiana when they heard the news.

"Gail was fucked up on drugs. During an argument she shot Felix with a Derringer he'd actually bought for her. But then she said it was an accident," West told *Classic Rock* with contempt. "That was bullshit. She'd also once pulled a gun on Corky's wife."

During his tenures with Mountain or West, Bruce And Laing the guitarist certainly burned the candle at both ends.

"I'm sure a few people would say: 'Leslie was out of his fucking mind, man,'" he said later. "I probably did do some crazy fucking things. But at least I'm here to talk to you about it."

From the 1970s onwards Leslie was addicted to heroin, morphine and cocaine, although from 1986 onwards he cleaned up.

"Instead of detoxing in twenty-eight days I did it over several years, at such a tiny decline [in dosage] that there were no symptoms," he told *Classic Rock* in 2014. "Later I realised that I was taking such a very low amount, I guess it was like a placebo."

In 2009, Johnny Winter's manager Paul Nelson used the same procedure to cure Winter of his own addiction. Gradually Nelson cut the daily input of his boss until, West revealed, "Johnny asked how much Methadone he was taking, and Paul replied: 'None. You've been clean for months.' Johnny was incredibly grateful."

Despite shedding weight in later years, plagued by diabetes West's health declined. In the early 2000s he was suffering from bladder cancer. But worse was yet to come.

In June 2011 doctors were forced to amputate his right leg at the knee after it turned blue during a 10-hour flight.

"They put me in a coma for four days," West recalled. "My wife Jenni says: 'If they don't amputate your leg, you're gonna lose your life.' So I said to her: 'Ah, do whatever you have to do'."

Although he was fitted with

West, Bruce And Laing in 1973.

MAIN: ALAMY; INSET: GETTY

18+

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME -

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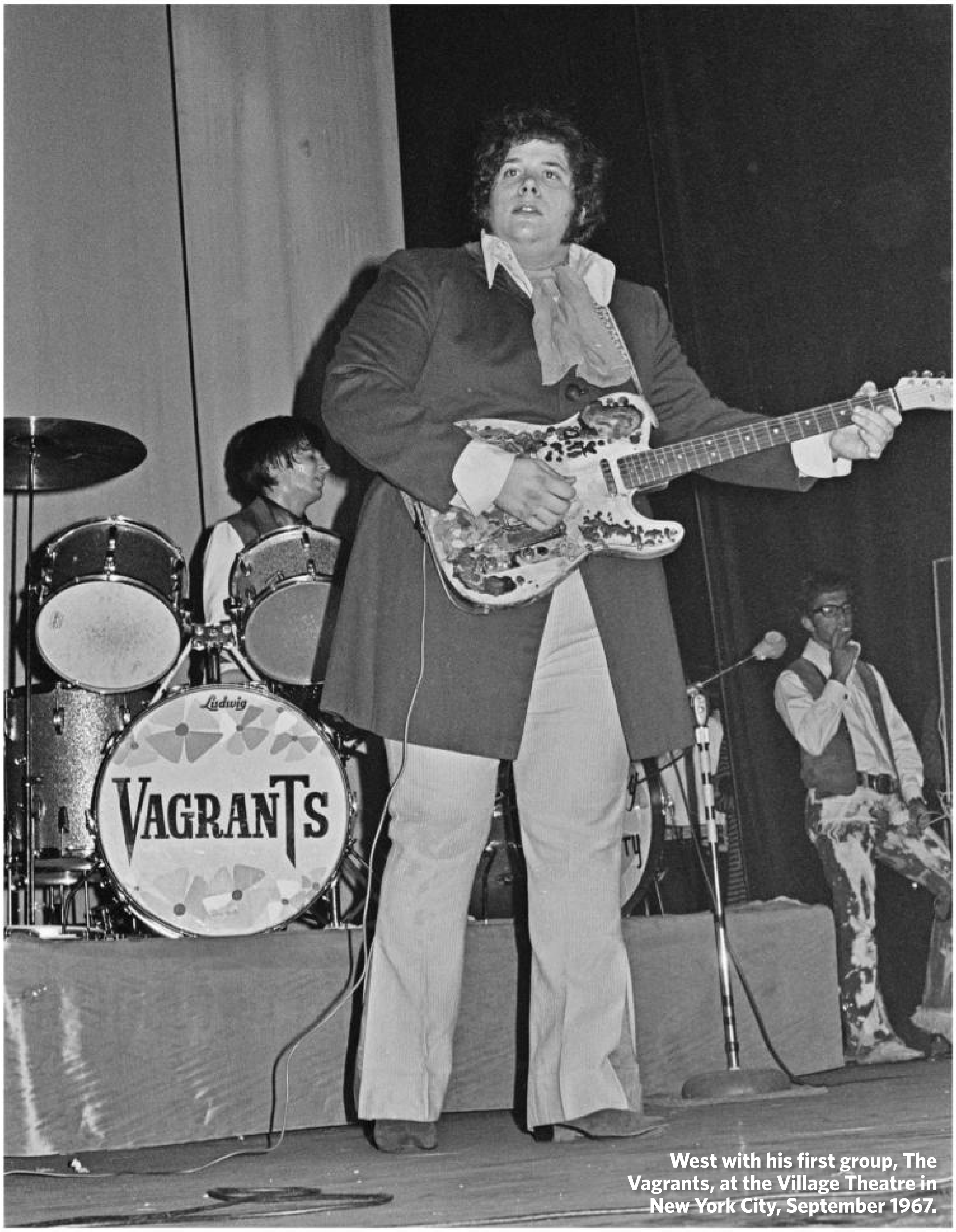


West with his first group, The Vagrants, at the Village Theatre in New York City, September 1967.

GETTY

> **"I wanted to have the greatest, biggest tone, and I wanted vibrato like somebody who plays violin in a hundred-piece orchestra."**
>
> **Leslie West**

a prosthetic limb he didn't like wearing it, and touring became a trial.

"I've a vehicle called an MV-1, with two ramps that come out to drive the chair up," West revealed to *Classic Rock*. "A four-hour drive is about all I can take without needing a rest. On stage I have electronic wheelchairs. Even with that I can't go up too steep an incline, because I don't want to fall. So it's a little trippy to go out on tour."

West continued to make solo records. His 2010 album *Usual Suspects* featured a cast of A-listers including Billy Gibbons, Slash, Zakk Wylde, Joe Bonamassa and Steve Lukather. Four years later, *Soundcheck* included cameos from Brian May, Peter Frampton and Jack Bruce on a live version of *Spoonful*. His 2013 album *Still Climbing* featured appearances by Johnny Winter, Johnny Lang, and Twisted Sister's Dee Snider on vocals. The album also included a reprise of *Long Red*, a song that first appeared on West's solo debut, *Mountain*, but had taken on a whole new popularity (as well as being covered by Mott The Hoople).

Sounding amazed, West told an interviewer: "*Long Red* is one of the most sampled songs in the history of hip-hop. Besides Jay Z and Kanye West, Lana Del Rey [sampled it], but they didn't get clearance yet." He added with a chuckle: "My lawyer's right on that."

Earlier in the noughties, Mountain's fuzzed-up simplicity rubbed off on the likes of Kyuss, Monster Magnet and Queens Of The Stone Age.

Although West and Jack Bruce had their differences during the days of West Bruce & Laing, West remained fond of his former bandmate. "When Jack passed away [in 2014]… I still haven't gotten over it," he told *Classic Rock*.

THE STARS PAY TRIBUTE

I will never forget you, my hero. I am your little brother. Thank you for what you have done for me. Rest in peace my dearest friend.
Michael Schenker

Leslie's tone could stop a rhino in full charge. Mountain's sound was massive. Leslie was a warm and lovely guy.
Paul Stanley, Kiss

Do yourself a favour, listen to the deep cuts. And if you play, learn a few of his licks.
Alex Skolnick, Testament

Like Albert King, Leslie West just knew how to play one note with feeling. It sounds so simple, but it isn't.
Jay Jay French, Twisted Sister

Leslie West was a rock and roll hall of fame member that didn't need a statue nor ceremony to prove it. He just was and will always be.
Joe Bonamassa

Yet another sad loss… I've never tired of listening to Mountain.
David Coverdale, Whitesnake

God Bless Pontiff Leslie West
Zakk Wylde

He was a pioneer of both singing and guitar playing.
Glenn Hughes

I joined Mountain on stage several times and made a guest appearance on their *Masters Of War* album. It was always an honour and a pleasure.
Warren Haynes, Gov't Mule

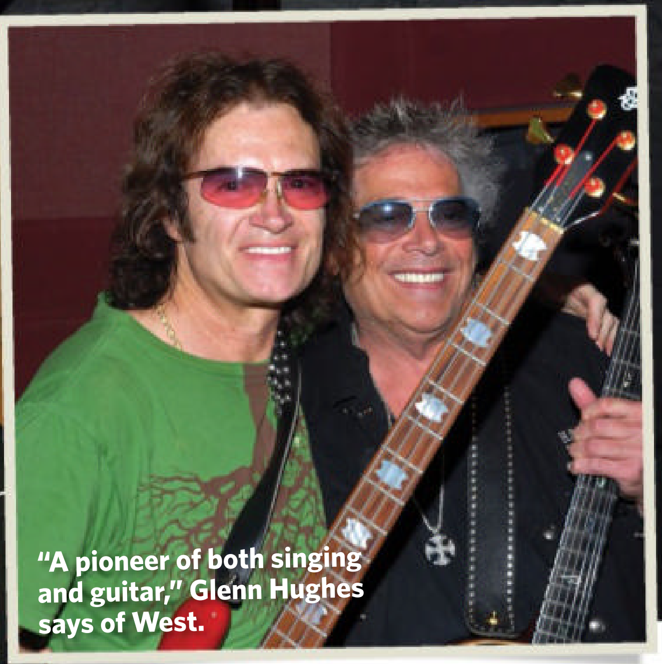
Total rock'n'roll to the end. Didn't give a flying fuck who he offended, and had, of course, a monster guitar tone.
Andy Powell, Wishbone Ash

We had some great times together on stage and some legendary laughs every day on tour. Thank you for all the great music.
Joe Satriani

When you talk about ground-breaking guitar tones, Leslie was a giant.
Steve Stevens

A smiling West in 2009, having finally cleaned up from multiple addictions.

West with Dee Snider, who sang on West's 2013 album *Still Climbing*.



"A pioneer of both singing and guitar," Glenn Hughes says of West.

There were opportunities to take things to higher levels, but West didn't always make the best decisions. For example, after he had guested on West's *The Great Fatsby*, Mick Jagger suggested that West should speak to Keith Richards about replacing the departing Mick Taylor in the Rolling Stones, but he didn't make the call.

"The Stones were an English aristocratic band – a lot of guys were in the picture and it probably wouldn't have worked out," he shrugged. "But you never know."

West's spikiness subsided but he admitted that he wasn't always the easiest of guys to work with. However, those lucky enough to have pierced the armour will testify that beneath it was a funny, loyal and immensely likable personality.

"I'm still a prick, these days I'm just a happy prick," he told *Classic Rock* in 2003. "If the band are playing good and my guitar still makes my balls vibrate, then you can take every last thing I've got."

With relations having deteriorated between West and Laing due to a dispute over *Mississippi Queen*, a version of Mountain last played live back in 2010.

Talking exclusively to *Classic Rock*, Corky Laing says: "I consider myself a lucky sonofabitch to have been alongside Leslie during some brilliant moments that our final falling out could never erase. He was bigger than big and larger-than-life, so when things were great you could never get any better. But when things got dark, boy were they dark. I'm going to miss those good times. What an amazing human being he was."

Long-time tour manager Paul Newcomb spoke to West days before his heart attack. "It was the happiest I had heard Leslie in a long time," Newcomb reveals. "He had bought an amazing property in Florida, concluded a deal on his back catalogue and had just got the go-ahead to record a new album."

Alas it was not meant to be.

He was a major influence on my playing. God Bless you, brother.
Neal Schon, Journey

Leslie was a great guitar player, and Mountain were one of the first bands that Sabbath supported on our early tour of America.
Tony Iommi

Leslie West was the very first US guitar player I met when Humble Pie opened for Mountain in America. His playing and sound had me glued watching everything he did.
Peter Frampton

Aah… Mr West. An absolute beast. A fuzz-laden riff machine with superb feel and taste.
Scott Holiday, Rival Sons

One of the baddest, true hard-core rock and roll guitar warriors that ever lived.
Lita Ford

So much style, tone, and so many funny stories. Glad I got to spend a little time with him over the years.
Vinnie Moore, UFO

His guitar tone on *Mississippi Queen* is hands-down the BADDEST on record.
Tom Morello

His playing that Les Paul Jr, that tone and tenacity, really moved me.
Robbie Robertson

Leslie was an influence on my playing from day one. He had that vibrato, tone, feel and emotion that only a few true master guitarists have.
Dave Meniketti, Y&T

I saw ALL guitarists bow down before him – yes, even Eddie Van Halen
Dee Snider, Twisted Sister

He was just a wonderful cat, always in a good mood when I ran into him every few years.
Steven Van Zandt

I lost a dear friend yesterday. Leslie was an amazing guitarist. RIP.
Ace Frehley

Leslie was my friend and mentor. He was a humorous guy, a very special character.
Joe Lynn Turner

The captain of the *Mississippi Queen*. Mountain had such a huge impact on us.
Black Stone Cherry

GETTY x3

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THE GOLD STANDARD

Brian May and Roger Taylor look back at 50 years of **Queen**: the incredible journey of four young musicians with "an insane confidence and a precocious belief in our own unique talents" who conquered the world.

Words: **Dave Everley**

Brian May isn't one to live in the past. But the Queen guitarist has recently been listening to an old tape he didn't know existed. It features a recording of one of the group's earliest gigs, in a lecture theatre at his alma mater, Imperial College London. It's the sound of a band who are far from the finished article, he says. But it's exciting to go back there, to hear the nascent Queen as they were at that long-gone moment in time.

"We're debating what to do with it," says May, hinting that it might one day get a proper release. "A few years ago we'd have felt very protective and thought: 'Nobody should hear this, because we're very rough.' But now, in the position that we are in our lives, we feel forgiving. We're not ashamed of where we were at that time. It was us against the world."

One of the most fascinating things about the tape for May is Freddie Mercury's performance. The singer was still a work in progress at that point, not yet the vocal powerhouse he would become. "Freddie had all the will and charisma and passion, but he didn't have the opportunity to harness that voice yet," May says. "Which makes me hesitate a little bit, because I'm not sure Freddie would be that happy hearing himself at this stage." He pauses for a second, then reconsiders. "But strangely, if he were alive and sitting here at this moment, he'd probably be the same as me: 'Oh darling, we were *kids*.'"

Today, the four kids on that tape are down to two. Mercury died in 1991, bassist John Deacon retired from the band and public life in the late 90s. Only May and Taylor remain, the beating heart of the band's current, Adam Lambert-fronted incarnation and custodians of Queen's stellar legacy.

"I do take great joy in the fact that there's an awful lot of love for us still," says Taylor. "It constantly surprises me."

2020 was due to be a big year for Queen. Not only did they have a series of massive arena shows across Europe lined up during the summer, it also marked the band's 50th anniversary. Yet even before the pandemic put the brakes on the former, May and Taylor had absolutely no plans to mark the latter.

"Everybody else can celebrate it if they want," May says amiably. "We'd rather just celebrate being here and being alive."

Taylor puts it more bluntly: "We didn't want to draw attention to how fucking ancient we are."

Whether they like it or not, 50 years is a milestone. The two of them might not want to mark their Golden Jubilee, but for everyone else half a century of one of the most outrageously brilliant bands of them all is something worth celebrating. ▷

CAMERA PRESS / STEVE EMBERTON

"We really did want to be hugely successful. It was a measure of our foolish vanity."

ROGER TAYLOR

When Roger Taylor realised that covid-19 had scuppered his band's plans for 2020, he did what any self-respecting A-list rock star would do: he spent a few weeks sailing around the Mediterranean on his boat. "This shit year?" he says of the past 12 months, not inaccurately. "But we were the lucky ones. I can't complain."

It's a few days before Christmas, and Taylor is at home in Surrey. Even on the other end of a Zoom call he exudes a distinct rock-star aura. He always seemed to be the member of Queen most comfortable in their own skin, and today, white-bearded and garrulous, he's lost none of that. "It's been hard work, but I've tried to extract every ounce of fun that I could get out of any given situation," he says of his 50-plus-year journey with the band. "You've only got one life that we know about, so I think you should enjoy it. And I've enjoyed it."

Do you ever think: "Fifty years. How the hell did that happen"?
Ridiculous, isn't it? After we lost Freddie, Brian and I both thought: 'Well, that's that.' And then events conspired to keep everything going. Every time we think the band is done, that's that and it was wonderful, something else comes along. It's not a conscious effort. Somebody told me the other day that the *I Want To Break Free* video just got it's five-hundred-millionth view on YouTube. And that's not even one of the biggest ones.

Does five hundred million views on YouTube give you the same thrill as getting a gold record did back in the day?
That was back in the day. It's not the same now. I don't even understand the charts. What's Number One in the singles chart? Well, nobody really gives a shit, do they? The album charts still seems to be important. We recently had a Number One album [*Live Around The World*], which was the first time in a long time. That was a big thrill. That chuffed us.

You met Brian May in the jazz room at Imperial College in London 1968. Were you plotting world domination from the start, or was it more about having the chance to play gigs and meet girls?
Well those were good alternatives. But we really did want to be hugely successful. It was a measure of our foolish vanity in those days. But when you're young you'd better be arrogant and have big dreams, because it's not going to happen by accident.

There are some great photos on your Instagram of you and Freddie at the stall you both ran in Kensington Market, on New Year's Eve 1969. Where did you first meet him?
It was at my flat in Shepherd's Bush. He was a mate of Tim [Staffell, singer with May and Taylor's pre-Queen band Smile] from Ealing college. He was on the periphery, just a mate, really. He had musical aspirations, but we were quite good players and we weren't really sure if he could sing. But his drive and determination to write original stuff was great. And of course we became huge friends because we had the stall. We were living in each others' pockets, scrubbing together to eat.

What was a night out with Roger Taylor and Freddie Mercury like in the early days? Were you hanging out at the trendy clubs?
Oh no, we couldn't afford stuff like that. We'd be in a pub, and then we'd probably meet some girls and try to get some drinks off them.

Queen's first gig was on June 27, in your home town of Truro. What do you remember about it?
My mother put on the gig. It was for the Red Cross. People did not know what to make of the not-quite-fully-formed Freddie, who was fairly outrageous.

Is it true that Genesis tried to poach you from Queen early on?
Well, they invited me to the studio to listen to them, then we went to the pub. They didn't say: "Do you want to join the group?" But I get the impression that's what they wanted, because their drummer had left. They're all lovely people, but I didn't really get the music, to be honest. It was a bit too prog for me.

I had a wonderful offer from Mick Ronson and Ian Hunter, actually. It was going to be called Hunter Ronson Taylor. I think that would have been good. ▷

MAIN: GETTY; INSET: ALAMY

Live and dangerous at Live Aid: Freddie Mercury and Brian May were one of rock's great partnerships.

"I do take great joy in the fact that there's an awful lot of love for us still. It constantly surprises me."

Roger Taylor

When you listen to the first two or three Queen albums, what do you hear?
We were in development for a long time. The first album was a combination of a lot of ideas we had, but it never sounded like we want it to sound. We had much more freedom on the second album, and we started to stretch out and experiment. By the time we did the third [*Sheer Heart Attack*, 1974] it had kind of got there.

A lot of people hold up *A Night At The Opera* as Queen's best album. Would you agree.
Not really. I think it's our most eclectic. I do think it's a great album, but I prefer several of the others.

You were fortunate to have four great songwriters in Queen. Were you jealous when one of the others had a hit?
Absolutely not. I remember Freddie writing *We Are The Champions*. I said: "That chorus is killer." I was very proud if someone came up with a great song. A Number-One single belonged to all of us.

Your song *Sheer Heart Attack*, on 1978's *News Of The World* album, was famously viewed as a response to punk. But you started writing it in 1974.
It was nearly finished but I never quite got it together for the *Sheer Heart Attack* album. It was always intended to be aggressively punky, even though we never saw it coming.

Speaking of punk, the story of Freddie Mercury meeting Sid Vicious while you were both in Wessex Studios at the same time has been told a million times.
[Laughs] And I've heard it a million times, each time slightly different.

What were the Pistols really like?
We got on with them really well. Apart from Sid. He was a thicko. John [Lydon] was very sharp. He was quite visually aggressive, but we got on rather well. I remember socialising with him in New York later.

Were you at the 100 Club watching bands like The Damned and The Clash?
I did go to some punk shows. I saw The Damned at the Royal College Of Art, and they were pretty cool. I thought Captain Sensible was great – this big, tall guy dressed in a pink tutu. But I couldn't stand the gobbing. That was pathetic.

You seemed to really enjoy being a rock star. Of the four of you, you were the one most likely to be papped coming out of some swanky club like Annabelle's.
[Laughs] I never liked Annabelle's. It was full of old politicians groping young girls. I never saw anything to be ashamed of [in being a rock star]; "This is who we are, this is who I am."

You were the first member of Queen to release a solo album. If that had done well would you have gone: "Right, lads, I'm off"?
No, no, no. Never. We used to call the band The Mothership. Whatever we did, we always used to

MAIN: GETTY; INSET: AVALON

Queen arriving by helicopter at Knebworth House in Hertfordshire on August 9, 1986 for the final show of their Kind Of Magic tour. It would be their last ever show with Freddie.

"It's been hard work, but I've tried to extract every ounce of fun that I could get out of any given situation."

Roger Taylor

come back to it. It was our gang. I never wanted to be a solo artist. I only wanted to be in a band.

The first half of the eighties was a roller-coaster time for Queen. *The Game* and *Greatest Hits* were huge hits, but then you released *Hot Space* and America basically turned its back on you, then Live Aid eventually put you back on top.
It was a weird time. *Hot Space* isn't really my favourite album. We had drum machines and this stupid sampler – which was the world's most expensive coffee table. I can understand the people who liked our stuff before not particularly liking that album. It's got some good stuff on it. I fail to remember what.

***Put Out The Fire* is on it.**
That one's nice.

And *Under Pressure*.
We rarely sat down and wrote songs together as a band, but *Under Pressure* is one of the few exceptions. We were doing Cream covers for fun, and David [Bowie] sat at the piano and started gong 'plink plink plink'. So we went: "Let's do our own song." The bulk of it was done in one hectic night in Montreux. But really, David and I finished off most of the rest in New York in The Power Station. Fred arrived very late. Brian never turned up. Neither did John.

Did you get on with Bowie, or were you just guys who happened to do the same job?
We hit it off immediately. He was the most fascinating man. Hilariously funny, dangerously witty and great company.

GETTY x2

Who were you closest to in Queen?
It was probably Freddie. But we were all fairly close. You had to be.

You had the best seat in the house for every Queen gig. What was it like up there when the band were in full flight?
It was fantastic. When we were on we were a real machine. And when Freddie was on form it was magnificent. But I have to say that Brian and I still play as well as we ever did technically. Maybe without the fire and ferocity, but we still make a very big noise.

Did you have any inkling that the Knebworth show in 1986 would be the last Queen gig?
That tour was a real triumph. Sold-out stadiums, two Wembleys, then Knebworth, which was a massive crowd. But we kind of knew that Freddie was not going in the right direction, physically.

After Freddie told you of his diagnosis, how did you process it?
With difficulty. We knew he'd been ill for a while. He was in bad shape.

But it seems like there were moments of real joy in those last few years you had with him?
During *The Miracle* and *Innuendo*, Fred was not what he had been. He just wanted to keep working. Which really brought us together. We gathered up around him and sort of protected him. ▷

George Michael (and David Bowie, inset) performing with the three remaining members of Queen at The Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert at Wembley Stadium on April 20, 1992.

His death didn't really sink in at first. Brian and I took five years to get over it. We were lost. The nineties, for me, was almost a lost decade.

There was a huge outpouring of love around the Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert at Wembley Stadium.
I do remember reading some very average reviews from *The Sun* or some spunky rag like that. I don't know, I was in this whirlwind of activity – it felt like I was in some sort of dream. I do remember being determined that we'd get Elton singing with Axl, which was great, because Axl never turned up for rehearsal. David turned up, Robert Plant was lovely. George Michael was magnificent.

There were rumours that George Michael was going to replace Freddie as Queen's new singer. Any truth in it?
No, not really. I remember hearing the rumours. But it wouldn't have suited us. George wasn't really used to working with a live band. When he heard the power he had behind him in rehearsal he couldn't believe it. He thought he was on Concorde or something.

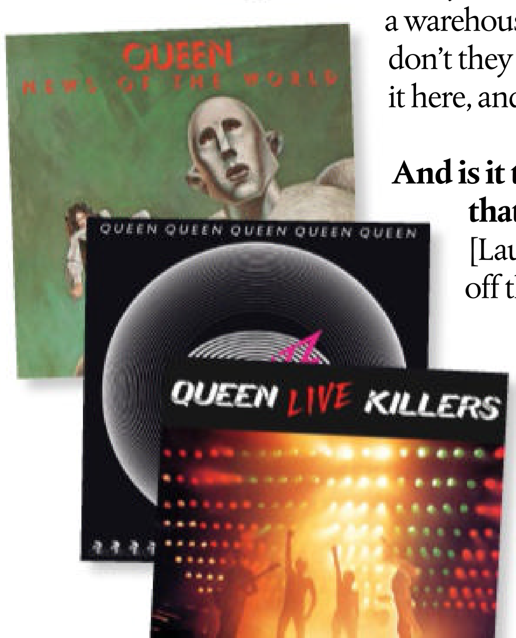
Do you still talk to Freddie at times?
I don't think of him being here in my studio now. But when Brian and I are both in the room we think we know what Fred would have said if he'd been in the corner.

Would Queen still exist if Freddie was alive?
I can't give you a definitive answer, obviously, but I'd guess it would still be together in some form. I don't think Freddie would have wanted to do it in the same way. I don't think we would be performing live. I think we probably would still have been making music, because that's what we did. And Freddie was obsessed with music.

"Every time we think the band is done, that's that and it was wonderful, something else comes along."

Roger Taylor

Is it true that you appropriated the statue of Freddie that stood outside the Dominion Theatre in London after *We Will Rock You* finally ended its run there?
Yes, absolutely. You can see it from here. It was in a warehouse, costing money, so I said why don't they just put it on a lorry and bring it here, and we'll put it in the garden.



And is it true that Brian wasn't happy that you'd done it?
[Laughing] I think he was pissed off that he hadn't thought of it.

Is it fair to say that you and Brian were the source of a lot of the bickering in Queen?
That's absolutely true.

What sparked you both off?
Key changes, arrangements, "Why are you doing that? I can't hear the vocals". Freddie was the great peacemaker.

But here we are, more than fifty years later. The two of you *are* Queen, and you seem closer than ever.
We've had a long, up-and-down relationship. But we're brothers from another mother.

You must have been worried for him this year, with all his health problems?
Yes. He had a terrible time, one thing after another. But I think he's really on the mend now. He's dedicating his whole life – well, apart from saving the ant or whatever he's doing this week – to being fit and well. And I hope he's successful.

The tours you've done with Adam Lambert have been massively successful. But there are a lot of people who would love to hear new material from the band.
We did record a song, which we haven't actually finished. It's very good… I can't remember what it's called. I think we were still discussing what we should call it.

Do you want to record a brand new Queen album?
It would be nice to do some stuff. I wouldn't rule it out. Adam has said: "Any time you want me to sing on something…" If the other two decide "Let's do something", I'd be there. ▷

GETTY x2

Freddie Mercury rehearsing at Shepperton Studios in 1977 prior to a Queen US tour.

CAMERA PRESS / TERENCE SPENCER

"One of Freddie's catchphrases was: 'We don't compromise.' But within the band we did. That's why we survived."

BRIAN MAY

Even without the pandemic, Brian May had a rough 2020. In early May he was left in agony after tearing a muscle in his buttocks during "a moment of overenthusiastic gardening", something he says sounds a lot funnier than it actually was. A few days later he suffered a "small" heart attack and a subsequent stomach hemorrhage that left him close to death. "Never a dull moment," he says wryly. Thankfully he's on his way back to full strength. "It's been a long climb. I'm not quite there yet, but I'm pretty good."

May has always seemed like a point of calmness and rationality amid the maelstrom that is Queen, although he can be protective to the point of spikiness in defending his band from their detractors. Today, speaking via Zoom from a sunlit room in his studio, the man who Roger Taylor describes as "an inherently decent person" is warm and engaging, even if he shares his bandmate's obstinate aversion to hanging out the bunting to mark Queen's half-century.

Even before the pandemic and your own health issues, you and Roger avoided any conspicuous celebration of Queen's fiftieth anniversary. Why is that?

We went through all these ideas with our team – let's celebrate being fifty years old. Then we thought that we'd rather just celebrate being here, being alive and being able to play.

Roger and I are first-class curmudgeons now. If something comes up, we go: "Do we really want to spend our time doing that? How much time do we have left, and what do we really want to be doing for this part of our lives that is worthwhile?" And the answer that always comes back is playing music.

Roger says you wanted to be a big band right from the point you met. Is that what you remember too?

Yeah. We had big, big dreams. We wanted it all, and we felt we had what it takes. It's funny, because if had been just me and Roger we would never have stuck together. Even though we're so well aligned in some respects, we're diametrically opposite in everything else. There's not a single subject we don't have opposite opinions about. We needed someone who would be the diplomat. And, strangely enough, Freddie was that guy.

Plenty of front: Freddie Mercury and John Deacon with Queen on Freddie's 38th birthday in 1984.

Everybody thinks that Freddie was that flyaway guy, but he was very pragmatic. If he saw a situation that was arising between me and Roger, he would manage to find a way through, a compromise. One of Freddie's great catchphrases was: 'We don't compromise.' But within the band we did. And that's why we survived.

What would have started the two of you bickering?

Oh, anything and nothing, A note, a tempo, a cup of coffee, a window…

But the two of you seem very fond of each other today. What changed?

It's very much like being brothers. There was always a fondness there, but there was a lot of competitive feelings. These days we realise the good stuff, because we've seen it all now and we value each other. We know that we're more powerful together than apart. If we truly get our energies aligned, magic happens.

What were the early days in Queen like? Was it fun, or hard work?

It was definitely fun. We would be carrying our own stuff into the gigs, setting it up with our roadie, dear old John Harris. We made our own popcorn to serve just before the gigs. It was all part of the preparation for the gig. And we'd invite managers and record label executives to the gigs. Of course they'd never turn up.

Did you ever play to an audience that really didn't get what you were doing?

Frequently. There's a famous story: we played this place called Ball's Park College, and we get booked to play their ball. It's a tiny thing, a couple of hundred kids there. We play the first set, and they're looking at us thinking why don't they play *Stairway To Heaven* or *Paranoid*.

In the interval, the secretary of the entertainment committee comes in and talks to us. She says: "Thanks, guys. Really, really good. I've had a request, though." And we went: "Oh yeah, what's the request?" "For the second half, can they have the disco instead of you guys?" And we went: "Give us the money… goodbye."

Early on, Genesis were sniffing around Roger to be their drummer. Did anyone try to tap you up?

Yes, Sparks approached me. It was after they had their major hit, *This Town Ain't Big Enough For The Both Of Us*, and we'd just had *Killer Queen* out. The two brothers [Ron and Russell Mael] came round my flat. They said: "Look, Brian, Queen isn't going anywhere, you're not going to have any more hits, but we're going to conquer the world." And I went: "Thanks but no thanks. I think I'm fine." ▷

MAIN: GETTY; INSET: ALAMY

The Fantastic Four: (l-r) John Deacon, Brian May, Roger Taylor, Freddie Mercury.

“Sparks approached me [circa *Killer Queen*]. They said: ‘You’re not going to have any more hits, but we’re going to conquer the world.’”

Brian May

Is it fair to say there was never a shortage of confidence in Queen?
I don’t suppose there was. There was an insane confidence and a precocious belief in our own unique talents.

If you listen to *March Of The Black Queen*, from *Queen II*, you can hear the seeds of *Bohemian Rhapsody*. Is it fair to say that?
Totally. There’s a whole line of stuff, going back to *My Fairy King* [from Queen’s self-titled debut album]. Freddie had all these little mini-operas in his head from the start, which he’d write down on his dad’s work notepaper. People say: “Were you shocked when people came in with the stuff for *Bohemian Rhapsody*?” No, because he was already doing that from the beginning.

Bohemian Rhapsody is rightly hailed as a classic. But it has overshadowed your own operatic epic, *The Prophet’s Song*, which was also on *A Night At The Opera*…
Well you’re hitting a nerve there. I would have loved *The Prophet’s Song* to have had a public life like *Bohemian Rhapsody*, but it never did. Mine was a distinct reaction to a dream I had, a very concrete dream, where I could see this strange prophet person and hear the riffs in my head.

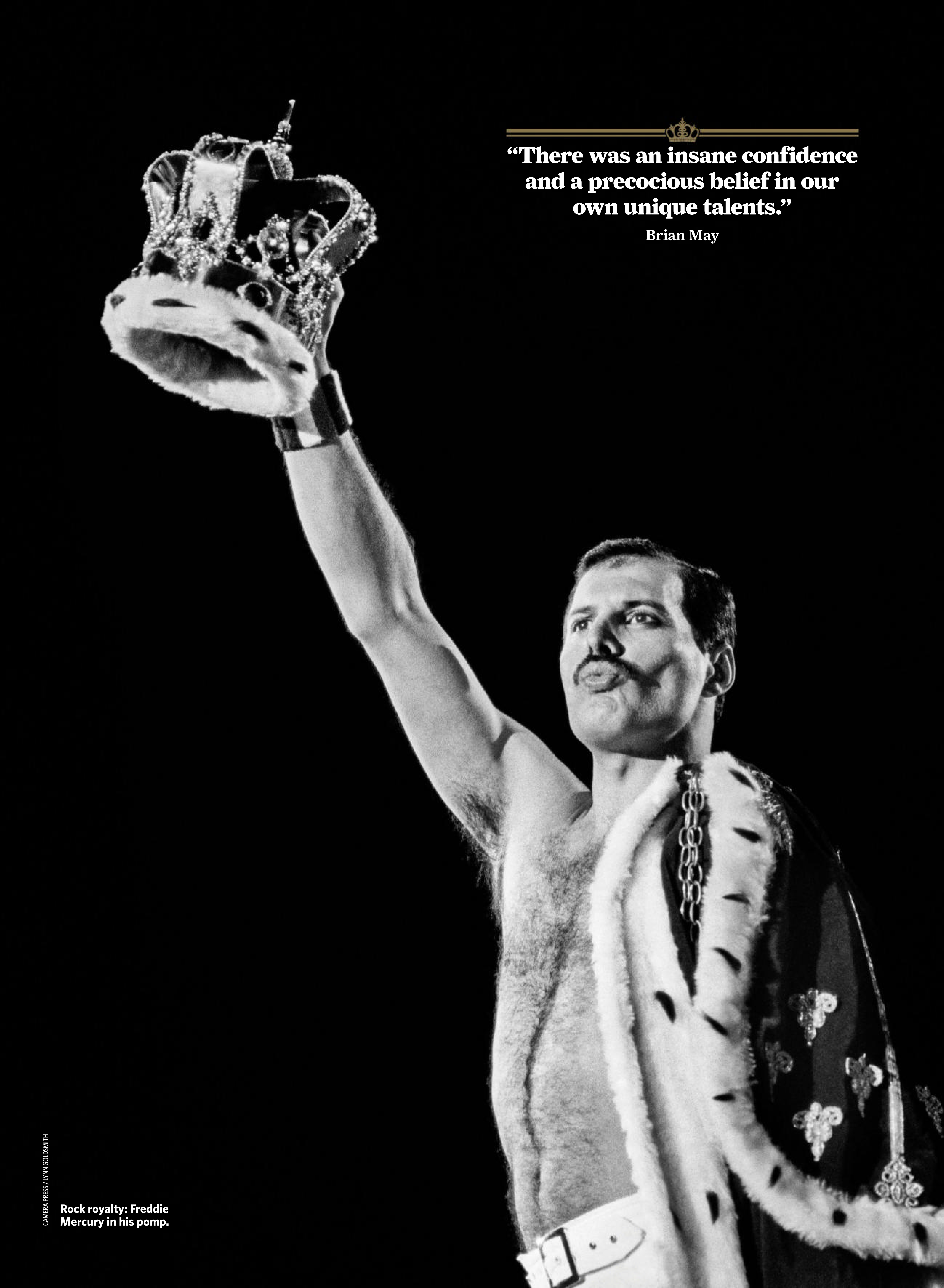
It was a struggle for me. I remember being in Rockfield [studios] and listening to all the stuff Freddie was pounding out very confidently, and I wasn’t feeling very confident. I was struggling to get these riffs in my head into shape, and I was tearing my hair out because the song was just out of my reach. But I had a strong feeling it was something I needed to do to move on. I think I was always a tortured soul, wasn’t I?

Being in Queen seemed to be a heavy burden for you at certain points. Did you actually enjoy it?
It’s tough, because you’re always struggling to make your own identity work within the identity of the group. If you’re in a situation and you feel like your voice isn’t being heard, it’s very negative – it motivates you to be mean and dogmatic and uncompromising and resentful. We all felt like that at various times. I know Roger felt it, John did as well. Freddie… I don’t know. Freddie was always a cup-half-full person. A cup-completely-full person, really.

But we all left the band at various points in various album sessions. I remember being in Munich, when we were doing *The Game*, I think, walking around the English Garden, thinking: “This is over. I’m never going to do this again.” And then you get back in there and you put your gloves back on.

The sniffier critics gave every hard rock band a tough time back then. But Queen seemed to take it more personally than other bands. Why was that?
There were quite a lot of those guys in the music press saying we were rubbish. So yes, it did hurt. What got us through was each other. We had the ability to be more vindictive and cruel to each ▷

ALAMY



> **“There was an insane confidence and a precocious belief in our own unique talents.”**
> Brian May

CAMERA PRESS / LYNN GOLDSMITH

Rock royalty: Freddie Mercury in his pomp.

Now I'm here: Queen + Adam Lambert at Madison Square Garden, NYC, August 6, 2019.

other than the press ever had the ability to do. So we got through by supporting each other, becoming a very strong family group.

A lot of the criticism was directed at Freddie personally. People wrote stuff they wouldn't get away writing these days. Was there an element of homophobia?
That's an interesting thought. I confess I've never thought about it. People didn't know Freddie was gay. We didn't know. And in the beginning I don't think Freddie knew. But he was, on the face of it, a very flippant, flamboyant, dancing-through-life person. And of course, that wasn't the whole person, it was a cloak he put on. But I think people did resent it. They thought it was arrogance.

Who were you closest to in the band?
Freddie, I think.

The image of Freddie Mercury was that he was unapproachable.
His image was of being unapproachable, but he was a very caring person, actually. He would give the impression that he was very flippant about everything, but he would always surprise you. If you had an argument, he'd come back a few days later and say: "I've been thinking…", and he'd have some further development and consequence of what we were talking about. He would be the diplomat.

You once said that being in Queen "fucked you up". What did you mean?
It's not an easy life. This is going to sound like a spoiled pop star, but it has its own stresses. You're exposing yourself to the public, you're putting yourself at risk of looking stupid the whole time, you're fighting various battles with the rest of the band or the organisation around you, and there's really no time to rest. You're swept away, you're nowhere near your school friends, your family, you're in some hotel room on the other side of the world. You live in this strange bubble. And it's not easy to adjust. Once you adjust to it, you can't *un*-adjust. It does screw you up.

"I still tend to walk into a room and assume that nobody knows who I am, and feel that I need to prove myself."
Brian May

The flipside of all that must be the time you spent playing. What did it feel like being on stage when Queen were in full flight?
It's pretty much the best feeling on earth. As a musician you dream of such things. But the reality is a thousand times better than the dream. That feeling of being able to make some kind of sound or gesture that connects in that way is incredible.

Queen always seemed too graceful to have their Spinal Tap moments. Did any of that stuff happen to you?
Oh yes. One of the great ones was in Holland. We had this wonderful rig that looked like a crown and would rise from the stage like a space ship. We're doing *We Will Rock You*, Freddie's one side, I'm on the other. That particular night the hoists had been wired up wrong, so instead of going up, it leaned over to one side. The whole thing goes up, big drama, then it went completely wrong. You've just got to laugh.

What's your favourite memory of Freddie during his last few years?
We had a wonderful time in Montreux, because we were away from prying eyes. We were a real family at that point. We didn't let anybody in. We didn't want anybody to molest Freddie in what were to be his last moments, though we weren't sure if they were his last moments at that point, because you have this kind of disbelief. Even though the evidence is in front of your eyes, you don't believe he's going to go. But it was a wonderful time. We were more supportive of each other in those last few years than ever before.

Do you still talk to him?
He's very much present. There are times when somebody asks you a question, and you don't really know what the answer is, and you think: "What would Fred say?" And you actually know

GETTY

The Paul Rodgers-fronted Queen in the Netherlands in April 2005.

what he would say. Even though he was fairly unpredictable, you knew how his brain worked.

If he was still here, do you think Queen would still exist?
Oh, without a doubt. Even in the glory days we'd wander off to the four corners of the earth, but we always came back to The Mothership. The Mothership would be alive and well, and we would all be coming back together to play, I'm sure of it. And Freddie is still part of the show today.

You had Queen with Paul Rodgers, but it didn't work out the way people thought it would. Were you worried that it would be the same with Adam Lambert?
People tell me all the time that after Queen we should have stopped and gone away and done something else. I think: "No, I don't think so. I was a part of building that, so I have a right to keep on." Should we play? Of course we should. It's in our blood. You get the question: "How can you have the audacity to give some of Freddie's lines to Adam Lambert to interpret?" Well we can because we do, and we do because we can. And Adam interprets these songs, he doesn't imitate Freddie. It keeps the songs alive.

Roger said you tried to record a new song with Adam a couple of years ago.
It was a song that we'd tried to adapt that had come from a friend. It had the makings of being a great song, but we couldn't crack it.

Hand on heart, do you ever envisage there being a brand-new Queen and Adam Lambert studio album?
I don't know. That's the honest answer. I really, really don't know. I can't see any objection to it, but it just hasn't happened so far.

When you look back on the last fifty-odd years and the life you've had, does it sometimes take you by surprise?
Constantly. I still tend to walk into a room and assume that nobody knows who I am, and feel that I need to prove myself. Those things don't go away. I wake up and I go: "My god, did that stuff really all happen?"

Queen's Live Around the World is available on DVD, Blu-Ray and digital download now.

GETTY x2

GUARANTEED TO BLOW YOUR MIND

Eleven Queen songs you never hear on the radio but should.

GOIN' BACK
(Larry Lurex single, 1973)
The artist name on the single was Larry Lurex, but this languid cover of a Carole King classic was really a pre-fame Mercury, May and Taylor doing a favour for paymasters Trident. If Phil Spector had produced Queen, it would have sounded like this.

MY FAIRY KING
(*Queen*, 1973)
The cogs of Freddie Mercury's musical imagination were working overtime even on their first album. A multi-part mini-epic arriving in a swirl of leather, chiffon and black nail varnish, *My Fairy King* kicked off the journey that eventually culminated in *Bohemian Rhapsody*.

SOME DAY ONE DAY
(*Queen II*, 1974)
Queen veered close to prog on their second album, but Brian May's otherworldly semi-ballad took off somewhere else entirely. Hazy and unknowable, they never sounded like this again.

TENEMENT FUNSTER
(*Sheer Heart Attack*, 1974)
Queen's third album was an entire musical universe in itself. Amid the dandy pop, playful ragtime and proto-thrash metal aggro was Roger Taylor's love letter to the aspirational power of rock'n'roll.

THE PROPHET'S SONG
(*A Night At The Opera*, 1975)
Bohemian Rhapsody grabbed the headlines, and just about everything else, but Brian May's eight-minute epic is no less ambitious or insane, not least in the fever-dream chorale at its centre. Kicks back in with a killer riff too.

DROWSE
(*A Day At The Races*, 1976)
No member of Queen seemed as happy in their own skin as Roger Taylor, and *Drowse* reflected that. This was the drummer as an old man looking back at his younger self and saying: "Wasn't it *brilliant*"?

IT'S LATE
(*News Of The World*, 1977)
One of *the* great Queen tracks: six minutes of escalating sexual tension set to a blockbusting Brian May riff, it builds and builds before exploding in a big sweaty mess. When it's done you'll be reaching for a fag.

PUT OUT THE FIRE
(*Hot Space*, 1982)
Hot Space is the Queen album Queen fans love to hate. But it's not that bad, and this strutting anti-gun broadside stands shoulder to shoulder with their very best songs.

PRINCES OF THE UNIVERSE
(*A Kind Of Magic*, 1986)
Part of the soundtrack to cult classic *Highlander*, this sword-swinging monster sees May and Taylor cranking up the volume and having a blast doing it – a;though not as much as Mercury when he hollers '*Bring on the girls*!' with his tongue jammed firmly in his cheek.

RIDE THE WILD WIND
(*Innuendo*, 1991)
It's impossible not to view Queen's swansong album through the prism of impending mortality. *Ride The Wild Wind* pulses with lust-for-life romance, but a current of sadness swirls beneath it. The line '*Gonna leave it all behind/Get out of the rat race*' is equally defiant and heartbreaking.

TIME TO SHINE
(*The Cosmos Rocks*, 2000)
May and Taylor's union with Paul Rodgers worked better when they weren't trying to sound like Queen, as this soaring highlight from their sole album together proves. It makes you wonder what would have happened if they'd stuck it out.

FELL ON BLACK DAYS

From child model and actor to rock frontwoman with **The Pretty Reckless**, Taylor Momsen's life followed an upward curve. Then suddenly tragedy struck and it became life-threatening turmoil.

Words: **Emma Johnston**

At just 27 years of age, Taylor Momsen is a rock'n'roll veteran. Her band The Pretty Reckless are about to release their fourth album, *Death By Rock And Roll*, a bold alignment of grunge riffs and classic-rock choruses that tackles grief, depression and survival with a clarity reaped by hard-earned experience. It's the pinnacle so far of a music career stretching back to 2008, when singer Momsen formed the band as a 14-year-old. But she's been in the limelight for a lifetime.

Momsen was born in St Louis, Missouri in 1993, just down the road from the famous Blueberry Hill club. In her infancy her father Michael, a former Aerosmith roadie and Beatles nut, and mother Colette took her to see Chuck Berry on home ground. As well as inspiring her love of music, they also had ambitions for their daughter – at the age of two she was modelling professionally, and a year later, barely out of nappies, the toddler's acting career began in earnest.

"One of the things I am so grateful for is that it taught me to have a very strong work ethic," she says. "I'm not sure I would have that if I did not start working at such a young age."

In conversation Momsen is bright, breezy and matter-of-fact, her voice low and measured with a hint of huskiness, often punctuating her thoughts with a quick, self-deprecating laugh. Today she's talking from her home in rural Maine, on an island facing the Atlantic Ocean. There she is entirely isolated save for her dog and the local wildlife – she's spotted seals, eagles, ospreys, foxes and skunks nearby. The remoteness suits her, allowing her to focus on writing songs. It's something she's always done, even when her acting career took off.

One of her fondest memories of being on a film set was playing Cindy Lou in *How The Grinch Stole Christmas* when she was six, which gave her the chance to go into a recording studio for the first time, to sing *Where Are You Christmas?*. "My intention was never to be an actress," she says. "It was just something I did." A role as Jenny Humphrey in teen drama *Gossip Girl* followed. For wannabe starlets everywhere, she had it made.

But for Momsen, she was betraying her true nature and at 14 she gave up the glamour of TV stardom for the grit of life on the road with a rock band. "My bank account didn't thank me for it!" she says with a laugh. "But it wasn't even a thought. When it clicked in my brain that I didn't *have* to be in a television show, I didn't think twice about it. I just followed my passion."

Producer Kato Khandwala was the key to getting The Pretty Reckless off the ground. A creative foil who introduced Momsen to guitarist Ben Phillips, he was "essentially the fifth member of the band [completed by bassist Mark Damon and drummer Jamie Perkins] and my best friend on the planet", and also the person who encouraged her to take the leap of faith.

Three hit albums followed. Then, in 2017, Momsen's world fell apart.

Touring supporting Soundgarden – her favourite band, alongside The Beatles – she found herself bonding with her heroes, thrilled to play for their audiences every night and to witness the Seattle legends in action. On May 17, after their show in Detroit, she hugged frontman Chris Cornell goodbye, ready to do it all again in the next city. By morning the news that he had taken his own life had broken. Devastated, and "not okay mentally", Momsen immediately quit touring and headed home to try to make sense of it all.

Eventually, after coming to terms with the loss, she started writing again. She called Khandwala and began to look ahead to working on new material for what would become *Death By Rock And Roll* (the title a mantra and running joke the producer lived by). But there was further tragedy to come. Shortly after their conversation, Khandwala died in a motorcycle accident.

"I was done," Momsen admits,

Pretties for you: (l-r) Mark Damon, Taylor Momsen, Ben Phillips, Jamie Perkins.

GETTY

"I fell into such a hole of darkness, depression and substance abuse. Essentially I gave up on life."

Taylor Momsen

her voice cracking slightly. "I fell into such a hole of darkness, depression and substance abuse. Essentially I gave up on life. I was so entrenched in all this sadness I didn't know how to get out of it, I didn't know if I would get out of it. And if I'm being frank, I didn't care if I ever did. I quit life."

Retreating from the outside world, and in a dangerously bleak place, it was months before Momsen could even listen to music, let alone write. But when she did, the floodgates opened, letting out all that fear and anger, and the eventual search for hope. "I poured everything I had left into this album. I'd hit the point where it was either death or move forward, and I credit music to moving forward, because it was all I had."

Those who are lost are honoured on the album, the sound of Kato's footsteps introducing the title track, and Soundgarden's Kim Thayil and Matt Cameron lending their unmistakable style to *Only Love Can Save Me Now*, recorded at Seattle's London Bridge studio where they made Soundgarden's major-label debut *Louder Than Love*.

Artistic control over the record is something Momsen treasures, even down to the cover artwork, which includes a photo of her naked in a foetal position on a real grave strewn with moss and leaves. Far from being the idea of shady puppet masters looking to cash in on sexualised imagery, it was, says the singer, entirely her own vision for representing the songs she wrote while at her lowest point.

"It's really about rebirth," she says. "The concept was: how do you represent all of this emotion and trauma and loss and everything that we've gone through in a photograph, and at the same time represent hope? And to me it's rebirth. The nudity is one thing, but I'm nude for a reason. When you're born you come into this world with nothing but your soul, and when you leave you leave with nothing but your soul. I really wanted to represent that on the album cover, and create a visual that describes this record."

The meltdown of a former child star is one of entertainment's greatest clichés – the tragic Britney Spears narrative the tabloids love so much. But there's a sense that Momsen survived her darkest hour *because* she turned her back on it all in favour of the band. And while rock folklore dictates that 27 is the most dangerous age, it's a year that's given her a chance to make the decision to live, to thrive, and to follow her instinct in pursuit of happiness. "I turn to music and it's almost like meditation," she says. "Playing music for a living? That is not a job, that is a joy and a pleasure."

Death By Rock And Roll is available now via Century Media Records.

FLOWER POWER

Now bolstered by the songs and shriek of new frontman Glenn Hughes, **The Dead Daisies** are a supergroup to take seriously. High time, then, to settle the debate over whether this is a 'real' band or just a rich man's plaything.

Words: **Henry Yates**

David Lowy, Dead Daisies rhythm guitarist and de facto leader, takes a deep breath and prepares to address the elephant in the room. "Look," he says, "we didn't start out like a bunch of teenagers, each of us pitching in a hundred dollars of our savings. One of the first gigs we did was opening for ZZ Top."

We have not come to cast aspersions on The Dead Daisies. The Australian-American-British supergroup are rapidly becoming one of the most exciting bands in modern rock. Their newly released fifth album *Holy Ground* is a roaring return that finds incoming frontman and chief songwriter Glenn Hughes somewhere near the top of his game. "This new album is all about what's going on between birth and death," the well-travelled bassist/vocalist explains. "Fear, faith, denial, celebration and happiness. All those 'feeling' words, y'know?"

"I don't do anything for money. I've never done that. Money never comes into the question. Nah. Not at all."

Glenn Hughes

We'll get to that. But here's the thing. Even now, eight years after the band's formation, a vocal minority of snarkier rock fans still insist that the Dead Daisies have a plastic heart. The conspiracy theory goes something like this. As the eldest son of Westfield Corporation co-founder and Australia's real-estate king Frank Lowy – not to mention being a formidable businessman in his own right – 66-year-old David Lowy has ridden the executive shuttle to headliner status. While other new bands tramp the boards of every rat hole in town, he has been able to open a bottomless attaché case and pay top dollar to a conveyor belt of name sidemen, from Guns N' Roses keyboard player Dizzy Reed to sometime Mötley Crüe singer John Corabi.

The most waspish accusation of all is that for Lowy the Dead Daisies are just a rich man's hobby; if it wasn't this, it'd probably be space tourism or racehorses.

Lowy gives a good-natured sigh. He's heard all this before. And the truth is, the moment you hear the immensely likeable guitarist's defence, the scepticism starts to wither. It's not just that his mobile buzzes periodically with the *Back In Black* riff. It's also the growing sense that he's a rock'n'roll lifer, in this world up to his neck.

"For me it always comes back to growing up in Australia," he begins. "Even before AC/DC it was The Easybeats.

"It's been a very long journey. I've lived my life in reverse. I loved piano as a kid, played bass guitar in a garage band as a teenager. But then I went to university and into the family business. After doing that for twenty-plus years I thought: 'Jeez, I always loved music.' I really wanted to start playing again."

Critics take note: The Dead Daisies are not Lowy's first project, nor did he leap straight into the superleague. "I've played in cover bands, carried my own gear," he reminds us. "We once did a gig for a big industry group. It was early in my music career, and I saw for the first time how badly musicians get treated. As far as they were concerned, they didn't know who I was, because when I'm dressed as a musician I'm a musician. They didn't connect me to my business career. We couldn't eat in the main room, we had to eat in the kitchen, they gave us terrible food, they were just downright rude to us. And I thought: 'Jeez, this is interesting.' It was an education."

When it's suggested to him that another great rock'n'roll businessman, Gene Simmons, wouldn't have stood for that, Lowy smiles: "Well," he says, "Gene would have me for breakfast as a businessman."

There was an uptick in 2005, when Lowy joined with Aussie rock icon Doc Neeson in the underrated Red Phoenix. But when Neeson (who sadly died in 2014 from a brain tumour) stepped back from the rock scene, and the financial crash of 2008 threatened Lowy's business interests, it seemed that the boardroom had claimed him back. "But I always wanted to get back to the music. Then our manager introduced me to Jon Stevens, who took the place of Michael Hutchence in INXS. We hit it off, put ourselves in a room for a week, and out came twenty-five songs. We didn't even have a band."

Lowy and Stevens recorded the Daisies' 2013 self-titled debut album with a cast of respected-if-obscure session musicians. But a cameo by Slash on *Lock 'N' Load* suggested the band had loftier ambitions.

And so it proved. Today, Lowy paints the band's high-profile acquisitions as a domino rally of happy coincidences. He was introduced to GN'R guitarist Richard Fortus when the band toured Australia. "And through Richard I met everybody else. He said: 'Well, do you want keyboards? Let's bring in Dizzy…'"

All those players are long-gone now, although Lowy stresses that each one's exit was entirely amicable, the players simply returning to their mothership ▷

Daisy chain: (l-r) Doug Aldrich, Deen Castronovo, Glenn Hughes, David Lowy.

bands. The arrival of Hughes feels different. A bona fide rock A-lister, he confers instant legitimacy and brings a raft of undeniable songs to a line-up completed by ex-Whitesnake guitarist Doug Aldrich and former Journey drummer Deen Castronovo. Still, those same doubters may wonder what's in it for Hughes – does he believe in this band, or is it yet another stop-over for a career journeyman?

"I want to work with people I like at this point in my life," Hughes says, regarding his motives. "I needed another vehicle that I hadn't tapped into. Something different. In the last few years it's been serious hustle for me. I don't want to slow down. Because I see a lot of my friends do that, and they've kind of lost their hunger to do it.

"I was doing the Glenn Hughes Performs Classic Deep Purple tour for almost three years," he continues. "It was early 2019. I got a call from the management of The Dead Daisies, asking if I would take a meeting with David in Hollywood. We spoke about what he wanted to do. They were obviously eyeing me for my songwriting and vocals. I'd seen them on the radar, but I hadn't heard a lot of material. So then I obviously had to get my thinking cap on and listen. To me they sounded more eighties than seventies, and they wanted me to take it back a bit. I had to ask myself: 'Am I ready to do something other than solo?' I thought about it. We got together in New York in May 2019, had some fun. Then we started pre-production at Sunset Sound. That was a week of 'Can we do this?' And we realised that we could."

Cynics might expect that Lowy is paying you well. Is that a factor?

"No, I don't do anything for money," Hughes insists. "I've never done that. Money never comes into the question. Nah. Not at all. You know me well enough to know it's about music. That's the primary purpose for me. It's sobriety and music."

How about that accusation that The Dead Daisies are a rich man's plaything?

"On paper it might look that way. That was the thing that queried me. Yes, David's got a nice jet. We fly around the world on that jet. It's great for me, I'm getting older now. But trust me when I tell you that David is so on-point when he's in the room with us. He is all rock, rock, rock. And 'Let's rock some more.' He's got his business gig, as you know. We won't talk too much about that. You can Google it. But seriously, you gotta believe me here, I don't sense a guy with money here, dabbling. I sense a guy that wants to rock. He's a great guitar player. He has no fear. He always wants to learn. I admire people like that. I'll always be a student of music, until they throw the dirt on me."

"If this was just a hobby, I don't think we'd have been able to achieve what we have."

David Lowy

If there is any remaining sniff of scepticism, *Holy Ground* will stamp it out. The Daisies' four studio albums to date have been more than decent, but this fifth is a quantum leap forward, the kind of music that would be impossible to make if you didn't mean it with every fibre. There's nothing wafty about juggernaut tracks like *Come Alive* and *Bustle And Flow*, with Hughes more than justifying his fee, whatever that might be.

"I wanted to write big choruses and big grooves," he says. "But then *Far Away* was written when I got out my acoustic guitar. I thought: 'We're missing a slow song, and here comes a seven-minute Glenn epic.' It's a song that speaks to me, because it's about me coming home, finding myself, the prodigal son kind of thing."

What other themes came up for you?

"Back when I was out there in the darkness, I wrote fictional stuff. But when I got sober I started to write about the inner stuff. I'm not frightened to express myself. There's a lot of stuff on this album about letting go. I can't fix the guy I used to be. But it's about karmic learning and being in the moment. These songs were written four months before the pandemic hit. But you'll listen to some of the lyrics and go: 'Did Hughes know anything about this?"

Covid-19 has certainly disrupted the Daisies' schedule; the album has been kicked down the road a few times. Now, though, with Hughes on board and vaccines being rolled out, the conditions might be right for the Dead Daisies to bloom.

Has the man with rock'n'roll's lengthiest résumé finally found a home?

"I hope so," Hughes says. "I've given myself to the band. I want to make music."

"How this band fits together is the key," Lowy stresses. "A good football team will beat a bunch of superstar players any day of the week. It's how the people relate with each other, read each other, complement each other. It makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up when you're in the studio with Glenn and he's on fire. It's a privilege to make music with these guys – and I can't wait to get out there and play."

Not just a hobby, then?

"Right," says Lowy. "This is anything but a hobby. Talk to any of the guys I play with; this is a passion. There's plenty of guys around like me. I don't hide from the fact I'm a businessman, I've got resources. But if it was that easy, more people would be doing it. If this was just a hobby, I don't think we'd have been able to achieve what we have."

Holy Ground is out now via SPV/Steamhammer.

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THE CLASSIC ROCK INTERVIEW

MICK FLEETWOOD

He arrived in Swinging Sixties London as a dyslexic school leaver and aspirant drummer – and discovered a world of blues, booze, women and global success with Fleetwood Mac. But even after a half-century of making incredible music, perhaps his greatest achievement is keeping the wheels on rock's greatest soap opera.

Interview: **Henry Yates** Portrait: **Ross Halfin**

Shake your moneymaker: The early-days Fleetwood Mac at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam.

You'd never guess that Mick Fleetwood has a starring role in rock'n'roll's favourite soap opera. Perhaps it's the island pace of his Hawaiian home, or the relaxation enforced by the pandemic, but a conversation with Fleetwood Mac's co-founder and drummer is as calming as being in a hammock in a tropical breeze, the fractious life story of his fabled band at odds with his convivial telling of it.

Of course, we shouldn't be surprised. While he's no angel, Fleetwood's abiding presence as referee, peacekeeper and hostage negotiator – always on hand to talk his more mercurial bandmates off the ledge, or hold the line when all seemed broken – is the reason Fleetwood Mac are now nudging past a half-century, with a catalogue of 17 studio albums. Fleetwood might be the groove, and along with bassist John McVie he's also the glue.

He was born Michael John Kells Fleetwood in June 1947, and grew up across the globe as the son of an RAF fighter pilot. But his school years were torture for a teenager whose undoubted intelligence didn't tick traditional academic boxes, and today he paints his move to London, aged 15, as his awakening.

A far more gifted thumper than he'll admit, Fleetwood's break came when his mentor, the peerless guitarist Peter Green, scouted him for John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, then invited him to form Fleetwood Mac with him in 1967.

Swiftly delivering two of the British blues boom's finest albums – 1968's self-titled debut and 1969's third *Then Play On* – the band seemed set for a smooth ascent. But chart-conquering singles like *Albatross* and *Oh Well* hastened Green's mental health issues, and the guitarist left in 1970, a casualty of fame, acid and unknowable problems in his childhood.

With early guitarist Jeremy Spencer also burning out soon after, the Mac's tradition of a revolving-door line-up was established. But the band continued, through an underrated transitional period in which guitarist Danny Kirwan found his voice on lost gems like 1972's *Bare Trees*, before he too unravelled, refused to take the stage and was fired personally by Fleetwood.

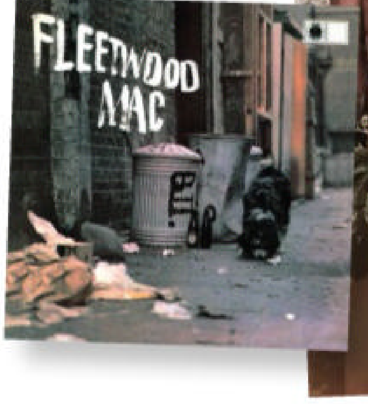
Then came mega-stardom, with the 40-million-selling melodic rock of 1977's *Rumours*, an album as famous for hits such as *Go Your Own Way* as for the failing relationships between lovers Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham, and married couple John and Christine McVie. And while in the past decade the *Rumours* line-up reunited for live shows, the wounds were still raw; Buckingham was ousted in 2018, although the reasons as to why differ according to who you ask.

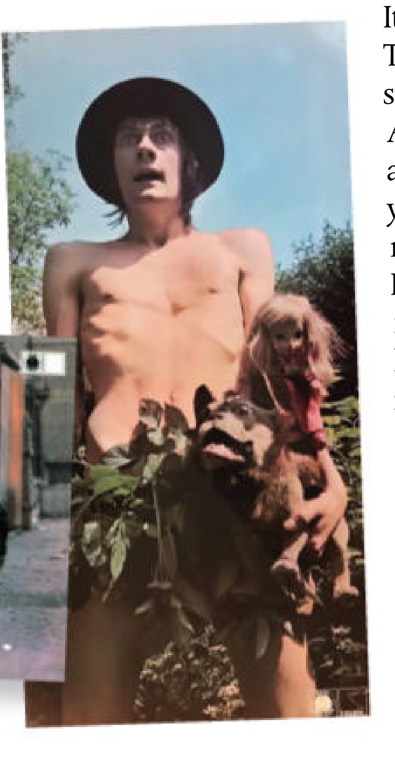
Through it all, Fleetwood has played on, most recently at an all-star tribute concert to Peter Green, performed at the London Palladium just days before covid hit, and now set for release as a live album and film just months after the great guitarist's death last July. It seems a good time for reflection on Fleetwood's 73 years. And you couldn't ask for a more genial host.

What are your memories of childhood?

I was completely dyslexic as a child, and I had no acumen – zero – in terms of academic prowess, or any academic worth at all, really. I still don't know my alphabet now. If you had a gun and you said: "Where's 'R' compared to 'S'?", I don't know. But I certainly never felt less-than, because I was never made to feel like that by my father and my mother. It was never even thought of. They were always completely supportive of all their children. Actually, we all went into the arts. We were a family where you came to the door and my father would hug you. I remember the first time my father met John McVie, he gave him a big hug. And John told me: "It freaked me out, to have a man hug me." I said: "Really? Your dad doesn't hug you?"

"My parents sent me off with their blessing, to go to London, with a funny little drum kit and a dream of being a drummer."





How did the drums come into your life?

I think my parents were just

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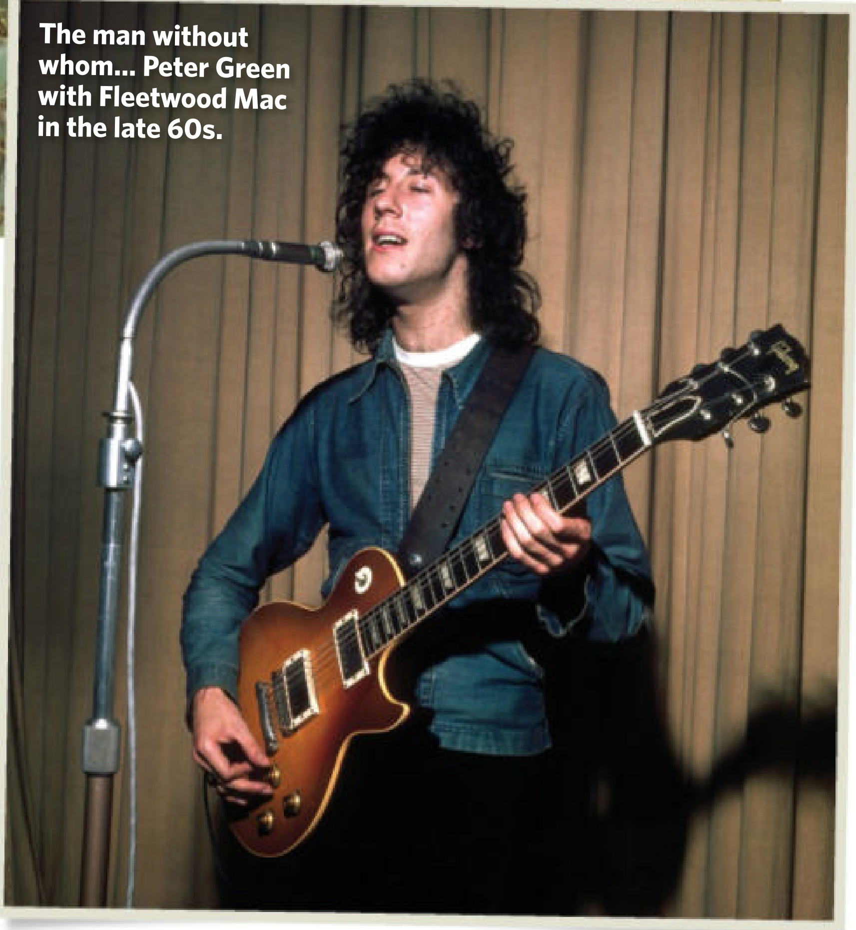
The classic blues years Mac: (l-r) Peter Green, John McVie, Jeremy Spencer, Mick Fleetwood, Danny Kirwan, 1969.



The man without whom... Peter Green with Fleetwood Mac in the late 60s.

"Fleetwood Mac's story is all about survival. Peter Green was not equipped to survive."

happy that I was doing something, versus being completely and utterly useless at school. I had taught myself to play drums in the attic, playing along to Cliff Richard and Buddy Holly records and stuff like that. I left school when I was fifteen. And it was wonderful of my parents, because they sent me off with their blessing, to go to London, with a funny little drum kit and a dream of being a drummer. I had no right to think that I could do that at all. And when I got there I was as happy as a pig in shit.

In London you drifted in and out of various bands. But do you remember your first meeting with Peter Green, and how that changed your trajectory?

We were all in a band together called Peter B's Looners. Peter Barden, bless his heart, had knocked on my sister's door because he heard me playing drums in the garage. So I got my first break. I'd never played with anyone at all before, ever. So I was in the band, and we'd lost our guitar player. Greeny had done a short stint with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers when Eric Clapton went to North Africa. But Eric came back and asked for his job back. And at that point, that's when Peter walked into this little rehearsal room in the East End.

What did you make of Peter Green as a guitar player?

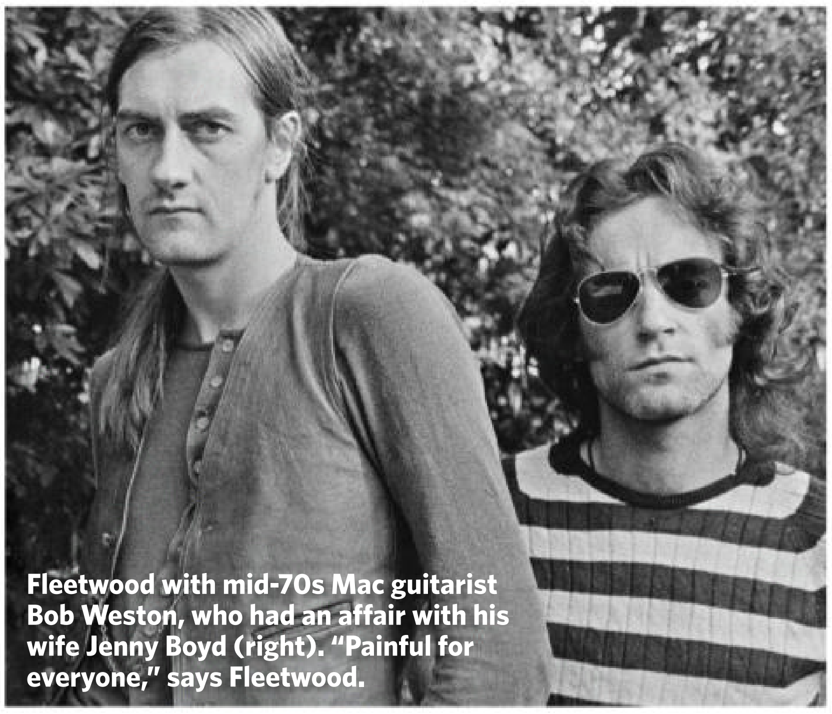
Well, this is where I have my instant confession, which is the first mistake I ever made. We'd already tried a couple of guitar players. But we'd heard about Greeny. He walked in with his Les Paul in a little brown case, almost like a cello case. He plugged in, and I remember saying to Peter Bardens: "I don't think he's good enough." I said: "He keeps playing the same thing." And of course what I was hearing was the simplicity of Peter's playing. But I got flustered, thinking: "Is he going to be able to learn all these songs in three days?" And thank God, right there and then, much to Peter Bardens's credit, he said: "Mick, you're wrong. This guy has style and tone and he's funky as hell." Of course, Greeny got the gig. And I've never scrambled so fast in my life to keep up over the next couple of weeks. I ended up with my mouth hanging open, going: "Oh shit!" Of course, the irony of the story is that I'm the hugest advocate of Peter Green. So thank God I got side-whacked and told to shut up.

You, Peter and John McVie were all in John Mayall's Bluesbreakers.

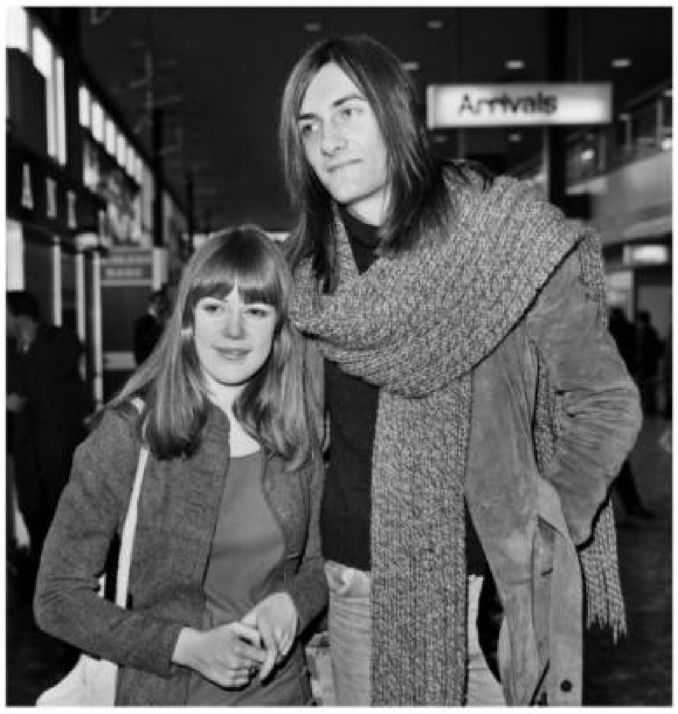
Yeah. They had Aynsley Dunbar, an incredible

MAIN: SHUTTERSTOCK; IN SET: GETTY

Big Mac. The world-conquering *Rumours* line-up: (l-r) Lindsey Buckingham, Christine McVie, Mick Fleetwood, Stevie Nicks, John McVie.



Fleetwood with mid-70s Mac guitarist Bob Weston, who had an affair with his wife Jenny Boyd (right). "Painful for everyone," says Fleetwood.



Don't stop, play on: Fleetwood at the Omni Coliseum in Atlanta, Georgia, June 1977.

drummer, technically astounding. So when Greeny said he wanted me in the Bluesbreakers I was like: "What do you mean? I can't do that!" But very quickly Greeny said: "That's exactly why we want you – because you can't do that." Peter Green had a well-worn phrase that we still use, especially me and John, as a blueprint. He used to say: "Less is more". And that's what he saw in me.

It wasn't long before Mayall fired you. Was it deserved?

Oh, definitely. It's no secret that me and John McVie drank too much. He was laid off a couple of times for being disorderly. But because he's such a great bass player John Mayall always took him back. But the two of us was just a bridge too far. Mayall was the first guy who was really organised. He'd tell you where to stand on the corner to be picked up: "You'd better be there, don't be late." You always got paid – he had little wage packets. You were taken care of. It was like being part of a fraternity, with a schoolmaster.

I remember being in the back of the old Tranny van. I knew I'd fucked up too much. One night, I'd been really drunk, and I thought: "I'm done, for sure." So I had the gig sheet, with the next two weeks of gigs, and I'd written notes. And under one of the gigs I wrote: "I'm fired". And almost to the day, I was. I actually showed it to Mayall in the bus and said: "I think I'm done, right?" And of course that was the case. So I wasn't with John Mayall very long.

"Peter Green had a well-worn phrase: 'Less is more'. And that's what he saw in me."

You, Peter and John McVie became the nucleus of Fleetwood Mac in 1967. The story goes that Peter only asked you to join because you were having a hard time?

Yes. I didn't know that until a few years ago, when I did a really lovely limited-edition book called *Love That Burns*, which was the beginning of an overture that the Peter Green concert is part of too. And when I was doing that book I spoke to Peter, spent a couple of hours with him. I've still got the interview tapes. He was amazingly sharp. And he said to me on the phone: "Don't you remember, Mick, you were so heartbroken? You were my friend and I wanted you to be okay." Because my then-girlfriend had left me and I was totally broken-hearted. I talk too much, but when Peter said that, I stopped. He didn't know it, but I actually broke down in tears. Because it was just so indicative of my relationship with Peter. It had nothing to do with music, actually, at all. Anybody can play drums. He just basically said: "Screw it, this guy is so down in the dumps, I've got to pull him out." It actually meant so much more. Of course, he fully intended John McVie to be there too. Y'know, the band was called Fleetwood Mac. Just the name demonstrated Greeny's lack of ego and his generosity.

There's sometimes the perception that you left Mayall in the lurch.

A lot of people always thought there was some plot in the ranks of the Bluesbreakers. Because

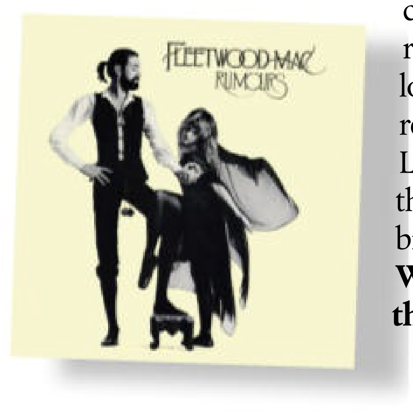
three out of the four people that formed Fleetwood Mac – Johnny Mac, me and Peter – came out of that line-up. And everyone very often thinks that we planned to dump John Mayall and form this band. Absolutely not true. We had no idea. I went. Shortly after that, Peter got a hair up his rear end about wanting to move on, and he left. That's when he formed the beginnings of Fleetwood Mac with me. Then we wanted John McVie to join. But it was not a plot at all. In fact Peter had no intention of doing anything at all before he approached me.

Jeremy Spencer joined on guitar for Fleetwood Mac's 1968 self-titled debut. How do you feel about the so-called Dog And Dustbin album now?
Oh, I love it. We were like pigs in shit, doing exactly what we wanted. Peter was so selfless. Even back then he really didn't want to be 'the dude'. He didn't want to be a Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton or Jimmy Page. There's a whole fraternity of amazing guitar players, and Peter was one of them. But he didn't want to be any of the super-gunslinger guys. Just think how heavily Peter handed that first album to Jeremy. Jeremy *is* that album, in many ways, with his Elmore James stuff. Peter loved just sitting back, playing rhythm.

GETTY x4

"[The drugs] got out of hand way after the making of *Rumours*. I remember not working for two years. I can't even remember what I did."

How did the band evolve with 1969's *Then Play On*?
By the time we made that album Peter was crafting these incredible songs. But that's also when Danny Kirwan joined, and Peter gave him half the album, just integrated that sensibility, didn't even think about it. Danny brought an incredible amount of talent into the band, by the way. He used to sit at the front and watch us play, almost like this funny little schoolboy. He had this band Boilerhouse, and they used to play with us sometimes, and we were like: "This kid is fucking unbelievable." Often he gets completely forgotten. But he had the complete touch, and unbelievable vibrato, like a Django Reinhardt, pure as snow. At that point I knew that Peter was getting a little itchy. Jeremy had no intention of ever going away from strictly what he loved to do, playing Elmore James. Peter was going forward, starting to write more. So it worked out fantastically when he found himself a compadre in Danny, who was really creative, and did all that lovely work on *Albatross*, which is really all about the harmonic tone. Looking back, I think it's fair to say that a lot of this stuff was ground-breaking.



When did you first get the sense that Peter was struggling?

"Can I interest you in a nice djembe? Good price..." Fleetwood at home in Maui, Hawaii in 2017.

Well I don't think we ever did. We got the sense when it was too damn late. And I don't think we would have been, in retrospect, equipped to do anything about knowing how to help him anyhow. He intimated that he was done. We were on a tour in America and he said: "We've got to give all our money away." Of course, we didn't know that his illness was starting then. And he disowned himself. Disowned what he'd done. Said that he'd stolen everything he'd ever created. Of course, it's nonsense. But then suddenly it was like: "Oh shit, he's fucking leaving." We were down on our knees, going: "What's going on? How can this be?" Especially me. He left very responsibly. He didn't dump us. Then came the real damage, which is public knowledge. And the new tribute concert is so not about that, it's about celebrating him, so I don't want to talk too much about the woes of what happened. I think he was just so not equipped to being such a powerful entity. And then the drugs… He was one person who didn't need any of that shit. He was so sensitive anyway.

Looking back now, what's your take on Peter's exit?

Fleetwood Mac's story is all about survival. What you would say about Peter was, he was not able to survive. I'm just saying that he was not equipped. He was not equipped for that journey. For whatever reason, I may never quite know. But it certainly was about a gentleman who was incredibly sensitive, and had been hurt as a young boy. Y'know, being Jewish in the East End of London, he'd had a rough time, way more even than the stories he would tell me. I don't think he ever properly got over that.

You've said that after Peter left, the band was floundering.

Now I look back on it, when we made *Kiln House* [1970], the first album without Peter… I actually really love that album. But Danny was pressured. Jeremy had not really made huge inroads to writing. So we went into Jeremy's rock'n'roll world. We just kept going. I was devastated when Peter left. It was so catastrophic. We were able to continue in this shaky way, and then we brought Christine in, and musically that really helped. And later on, with [guitarist] Bob Welch, that was actually a great period, when we worked a lot in America. We were a working band and we were surviving and it was okay. But none of that would have happened if we hadn't learnt that lesson. It was such a catastrophe when Peter left. But we got over it, and somehow we muddled through.

"If you said: 'You have to make your mind up, what was most important to you?" I would have to say that it was the period with Peter Green. '"

So many things have happened since then, with people leaving and coming – it's been our history, really – and I don't think me and John would be keeping the company store going had we not had a really brutal survival lesson right at the beginning. When all these other things happened, we just thought: "Well, we've done it before, so we'll do it again. Nothing can be worse than losing Peter." That's how I think we've survived. And we've never not been there, me and John. Ever.

Things went sour again in 1973, when you cancelled a US tour after discovering your wife Jenny was having an affair with Mac guitarist Bob Weston. How painful was that?

It was painful for everyone, I'm sure. But you have to take responsibility. I don't even look at it as a betrayal. A lot of these things we're touching on happened because we weren't equipped. I wasn't equipped to know that Peter was in trouble. I wasn't equipped to think: "You're having too much fun and you're not paying attention to your family." Me and Jenny got back together. We were able to carry on.

Why do you think the *Rumours* line-up had such incredible musical chemistry but such terrible personal problems?

For many years it was relatively A-okay, with all its ups and downs. But we had four people that were highly involved. John and Chris were married.

© DANIEL SULLIVAN/PRESS

Billy Gibbons, Fleetwood and Kirk Hammett (with the Peter Green Les Paul) playing *The Green Manalishi* at the tribute concert in London last year.

Stevie and Lindsey might as well have been. And the pressures of this journey that we took, they came unravelled. I think a lot of preordained beginnings of problems were just laid so bare and raw. One wonders if it wasn't for Fleetwood Mac, John and Chris probably wouldn't have broken up. But we had incredible times, even when everyone was broken up. Lindsey would say that none of us got the chance to mourn the break-up. Which was very true. And I think eventually that came back to haunt the relationships. But musically there was huge loyalty. It wasn't about "Let's make lots of money." There was a real passion, that this was not going to stop what we were doing.

What was the scene like while making *Rumours* at The Record Plant in Sausalito?
Well, me and Jenny had broken up. So all five members of the band were in the shit. Emotionally, totally fucked-up. But I don't remember it being dark and black or that hideous. Believe me, I'm pretty damn sensitive, I would have known. It never reared its head in that way. As the sort of father-confessor that I probably represented in the band, especially back then, I never had that feeling during *Rumours* of the troops coming to me, and me shitting myself, thinking: "We're done."

To outsiders it looked that way, though.
I was sort of managing the band at that point, and Warner Brothers used to phone up. We were like the golden goose, about to lay another golden egg. They were petrified. And I'd say: "No, we're not going to break up." Anyone with a blueprint would say: "There's no way these people can survive this. It's gonna blow." But I never had that [sense]. I knew things were awkward, and went up and down, but it was never like: "I'm done, I'm fucking leaving." It was always back in the studio next day. Again, none of us were equipped to psychoanalyse what was going on. I think the more unhappiness there was emotionally, the more everyone grabbed on to what we were doing.

You've said that cocaine use was creeping in.
Oh yeah. There's no doubt. We were well-equipped with the marching powder. But again, that's a well-worn fairy tale that gets more like a war story, that gets more and more aggrandised. I'm not minimalising the fact that we were definitely partaking in that lifestyle. But again, these weren't a bunch of people crawling along the floor with green froth coming out of their mouths. We were working, y'know? But that went on for a long, long time. And Stevie's addressed it, so I'm not divulging anything that she hasn't spoken about. But it got out of hand way after the making of *Rumours*. I remember not working for two years. I can't even remember what I did. I was the party animal in the band, for sure. I would venture to say that Stevie was a close second.

Your golden rule was to never get involved with bandmates. But by getting involved with Stevie you broke that rule.
Well I think we all did. That's why John came up with such a great album title for *Rumours*. He said: "This is like a fucking soap opera".

You were basically writing about your own failing relationships, weren't you?

Fleetwood with former US president Bill Clinton, who used Mac's *Don't Stop* in his 1993 presidential campaign.

MAIN: ROSS HALFIN; INSET: GETTY

I don't think Lindsey sang the vocal to *Go Your Own Way* in the studio until just before the album came out. There were some other words or something.

Why do you think it was always you who had to take the role of peacemaker?
I think it came from the way I was brought up. My father was really good with people, and I like to think that I've inherited some of that. Also, I think it's the fact that John has always said – and still does – "You sort it out, let me know when they've all calmed down and I'll come and do the tour." I think a lot of it comes from a type of insecurity. If you've got a little green gremlin on your shoulder asking: "What else are you going to do, Mick?" then you'll go: "Well I'd better make sure this thing doesn't stop." So the extra effort was probably through a type of insecurity, of "What the fuck else am I going to do?"

How difficult was it to bounce back from bankruptcy in the mid-eighties?
Not really that difficult. It didn't really do anything to me. It truly didn't. And I put that down to the way I was brought up. My father would always say: "Don't forget, Michael, like anyone else, you get up in the morning and take a shit." He'd also say: "It's a shame that everyone in the United Nations isn't just sitting there naked, then they'd start talking to each other." I never felt that my life was over. I think I was fairly anaesthetised in that period. I think I just picked it up and kept going.

By the time you got to records like 1987's *Tango In The Night* did you ever worry that Fleetwood Mac had strayed too far from Peter's original vision?
No. It's odd when you look at it on paper. But it was so gradual that me and John had no sense of betraying something or liking something more. Having said that, I mean, I love all the stuff we've done. But if you really put me in the corner and said: "You have to make your mind up – what was most important to you?" I would have to say that it was the period with Peter Green. And the reason for that is that's where I learnt to do my shit.

You let Bill Clinton use Mac's *Don't Stop* in his 1993 US presidential campaign.
Well, they used it without asking. But we liked him, and it took a natural course, and became a national anthem. Still is. But we didn't plan that. We had nothing to do with it at all. But we didn't want to end up suing them or something. We went and played at his party. One member of the band wouldn't have voted for him, but the rest of us did.

Fleetwood Mac's last studio album was 2003's *Say You Will.* Why no more?
We just stopped. Christine had left. At that point it would have been down to a dysfunctional band. Could there be another album? I think there's been a thousand and one times when the answer would always be 'Yes'. My wish, of course, is that there would be. I think this period now is interesting. Everyone's doing their own thing. So I don't know. But looking at the state of the nation, or whatever you want to call Fleetwood Mac, I have no qualms or regrets. If it ends, I think we've done A-okay, and we've left a lot of great music behind. There is a band. We're not broken up. There's some incredibly talented people. But time is wearing on. I don't know whether John wants to do this any more. But then he's done that a couple of times. He'll go, like: "Oh, I'm bored shitless…"

Do you think things could have been handled better with Lindsey in 2018, when he had to leave the band?
No, I really don't. I'm in touch with Lindsey and we had a great conversation, and it was understood that basically the dynamic for both Stevie and himself had really worn its way so thin… it was just really not a happy situation, and it's not good for either of them. We couldn't endure going on. And at that point, in many ways, believe me, even I'm going: "We're done." And that's the best way to describe it. There was just so much unhealed emotional content. Again, no one was equipped to keep it going. It was just too much. So that was that. One thing for sure is that Lindsey's work with Fleetwood Mac is faultless, and such a major part. In his own way, like Peter Green, he's unbelievably talented, hugely invested. Also, everyone has had their own story. There's not anyone – apart from me and John – who hasn't left this band for many years. Lindsey left for, like, twelve years – and came back. They've all done it.

You seem to have come through your career having remarkably few demons.
Fundamentally, yes, I think so. I truly don't think that I'm in sufferance of a blame game or an extreme woe-is-me. I think there could be a slight tincture of foolhardiness, certainly in my private life. I have some regrets that my undying dedication blinded me from things that were close to me, in relationships and time spent with partners. But I've always loved the life I live, and I still do, with all the ups and downs. So the answer is I'm still me, I'm still Mick, and here we are.

> **"If it ends, I think we've done A-okay, and we've left a lot of great music behind."**

Why was it so important for you to honour Peter with the tribute concert?
Well, I've really been wanting to do this for a long time. And it went on and off the radar. Time crept on by, and to me, I really felt that the beginnings of Fleetwood Mac were quietly fading away. Because the band did change so much. With the Stones, even though there's been some changes, it's still very much the Rolling Stones, and the principal players and the energy behind the band. We changed so much that the beginnings of this band, I felt, was quietly in danger of fading away into obscurity. I wanted people to know that those days were really a formative time. I wanted to do this to really say: "This is how it started." So I'm really blessed that we were able to pull this off. If this show had been five days later, it wouldn't have happened. The players wouldn't have even got on the plane to England. And then it probably would never have happened.

The concert film must have added poignancy, given that Peter died shortly afterward in July?
Yes. Peter passed away very suddenly, with no pressing health problems that were visible. He passed away in his sleep, he wasn't ill or anything. He just went away. Which was very sad, but also typical Peter in a way. He had no ego at all. He knew I was putting the show together. He said: "Oh, that's cool." And I'm like a little pet dog, going: "Aren't you excited?" He just wished us luck. There was a thought that he might turn up. We had his seat ready, should he change his mind. Whenever I play in England I always go: "Well, you come if you want to, Peter." And he did. A couple of times he came to Fleetwood Mac shows at Wembley. He didn't come to this show. But he was looking forward to seeing the footage. That didn't happen, sadly.

How did it feel to be on stage with Peter's iconic Gibson Les Paul again?
Well, Kirk Hammett bought that guitar of Peter's about two years ago. He lives in Honolulu, so for the concert he came over to rehearsals here in Maui, and he brought Peter's Les Paul. He uses it as a work guitar, which is great. My nephew said: "Uncle Mick, it's just dawned on me. Do you realise that you haven't been on a stage with that guitar for way over fifty years?" And I went: "Fuck!" It was so synonymous with Peter, and that guitar is so famous, and the tone of Peter Green. And Kirk, I have to say, played his fucking ass off.

We decided in rehearsals that his performance of *The Green Manalishi* with Billy Gibbons should finish up the show. There's no coming back from that song, y'know?

Do you feel like a septuagenarian?
No. And I worry about that. Because there's a mirror in the hallway, and I'll check myself out and say: "Fuck." I swear to God, you think you're about thirty-two years old. And I think that could be a bit of a worry. Because I'm seventy-three. I'm healthy, touch wood. But it's the mental and the emotional part of me. I won't mention who they are, but I know several people who are about my age and they're like children. And I think I'm one of them. Not all the time. But I'm so comfortable talking to people that are eighteen or nineteen years old. So I think I am, to a fault maybe, very young at heart. I can make a transition where I will rein myself in. But I don't like those moments when I rein myself in. Generally I probably feel like I'm about thirty-two years old.

How does it feel when you look back over the story of Fleetwood Mac?
This is an extreme story. We could be talking for another twenty hours and we still wouldn't run out. And if you put it down on paper, you'd say: "This isn't true, there's just no way." It's fairly unusual. It's fairly unique to find a story about a band like this, that's involved with partnerships and women and tragedies. But with all the twists and turns, it has worth been a damn. And the music speaks loud and clear.

Mick Fleetwood & Friends Celebrate The Music Of Peter Green… is scheduled for release in physical formats in April via BMG.

Who knows where the time goes... And what a time Fleetwood has had in his 73 years.

“I have some regrets... But I’ve always loved the life I live, and I still do, with all the ups and downs.”

ROSS HALFIN

BRICK BY BRICK

For years they watched other bands get the breaks while they didn't, but **The Dirty Nil**'s one-step-at-a-time climb has finally paid off.

Words: **Dannii Leivers**

The Dirty Nil have always been outsiders. "We've never given a shit about being cool," says vocalist and guitarist Luke Bentham defiantly. "Our fans love us not because of a fashion or for how trendy we are, they're into the universe that we built brick by brick."

The band have a few mottos, and 'brick by brick' is one of them. Another is: 'If you're not bleeding, you're not trying.' Those two adages have got them through a slow-burn, 14-year ascent that has lead to the release of their fourth album, *Fuck Art*.

At times, though, it seemed that their dreams were destined not to come true. Bentham formed the band with drummer Kyle Fisher in 2006 (current bassist Ross Miller joined in 2017) in their home town of Dundas on the outskirts of Hamilton, Ontario. Initially there was very little appetite on the local scene for the Nil's brand of "howlingly loud", sparky power-pop and punk-indebted rock'n'roll. For years the band were ignored by the press, while their peers leapfrogged over them in every sense. "Everyone else was touring internationally and had management, a label, booking agents," says Bentham, who is effervescent in conversation and possesses a dry, self-deprecating wit. "We had *nothing*. We were just basically bouncing around southern Ontario like a bunch of numpties."

While the media was apathetic, the public weren't much better.

"I was sitting on the [travelling punk festival] Warped Tour [in 2015], playing with shitty bands that were running all tracks, not even playing their instruments on stage," Bentham recalls. "But they were selling like ten thousand dollars' worth of merch a day, while our band was hauling our shit out to play for four people. We had two T-shirts, no one was buying either of them, and I thought maybe I should go back to school."

In the end it was "the sublime highs of rock'n'roll" that kept their will alive – along with a ton of hard work. Having resisted working with a label after years of being offered "garbage contracts" ("I thought everyone was trying to screw us over," Bentham admits), the band finally decided to sign with Dine Alone Records in order to complete their debut album, 2016's *Higher Power*.

Soon their luck began to change. In 2017 they opened for their childhood heroes The Who in Quebec, then won Breakthrough Group Of The Year at Canada's prestigious Juno music awards.

"We learned a lot of lessons the hard way that's for sure," says Bentham, who is speaking to us over Zoom, surrounded by plants in his new flat. "One of the things I really believe is [that] life is all about consistent and persistent effort." Dressed in a black hoodie, his bleached blonde hair brushing his forehead, the frontman looks conspicuous, even without the outlandish, custom sequin and stud-encrusted shirts he is known for wearing onstage.

> **"Ultimately we're trying to bring joy with copious amounts of volume, swearing and feedback."**
>
> **Luke Bentham**

At the beginning of March last year, having spent a year and a half honing the songs that would make up *Fuck Art*, the band booked themselves three weeks in Toronto's Union Studios, flew in John Goodmanson, the Seattle-based producer who worked on their 2018 album *Master Volume*, and laid down the drums and bass parts in four days.

Then the reality of covid-19 hit the fan. "[Goodmanson] turned to me and said: 'They're closing the US/Canada border, I have to go now,'" Bentham remembers.

With their producer gone, the band had two options: take over production of the record themselves, or put the whole thing on pause. "I was like, fuck that," Bentham continues. "I would rather record this thing on a yak back or an answering machine than stop."

But their challenges didn't end there. As covid cases continued to spike, a state of emergency was announced in Ontario, leaving Bentham, helped by engineer Darren McGill, with just 48 hours to record the guitars for the album before the studio was shut down. While the rest of the band stayed at home, the pair worked in two frantic 16-hour stints, spending three hours on each song before moving on to the next.

"I've never experienced that level of fatigue mentally and physically in my life before," says Bentham. "When we finished, it was ten minutes before midnight. All we'd consumed was a case of sparkling water, a few pots of coffee and four pizza pockets. I drove home. I was the only car on the highway. And I was crying I was so happy."

The straight-to-the-point way the album was laid down has resulted in the band's most taut, urgent record yet. Despite their playfulness, there's desperation fizzing through the full metal throttle of *Doom Boy* and *Ride Or Die*. Lyrically, too, some of the themes on the new record are hitting harder. This year [we did this interview in December 2020] the band all turned 30, and it's a milestone that's clearly been weighing on Bentham's mind.

"There's certain expectations at this age now," he says with a laugh. "Most of my friends are not in rock'n'roll. They're like, 'I'm trying to get this baby seat in this KIA', and I am just not there at *all*. I'm trying to figure out how I sneak a beer into church on Christmas night."

He might seem to be continuously engaged in a battle between embracing and fighting the aging process, but Bentham insists that the album is more about finding happiness by looking forwards rather than backwards, and that these one-time underdogs have a lot to be grateful for. "That's why we called it *Fuck Art*," he says. "Even my angry, senile grandmother couldn't say it without smiling. And that's what we're ultimately trying to do here: to bring joy with copious amounts of volume, swearing and feedback."

Fuck Art is out now via Dine Alone Records.

STEPHANIE MONTANI

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO STEVEN WILSON

Look at the world, not at your phone. Make music for the love of it, not as a career. Serial killers are fascinating. The best is yet to come. These are among the things that shape his world view.

Interview: **Polly Glass**

Steven Wilson made the most of 2020. He started a podcast (*The Album Years*) with his old friend Tim Bowness. He began writing a book (currently due in late 2021). He started working on his next record. And another. All in conjunction with "really getting to know" his two stepdaughters, having tied the knot in 2019. "Getting to that point, at the age of fifty-one, and finally being in a stable family with children… it is wonderful," he says, smiling, over Zoom.

It's been a huge transition for the shape-shifting frontman (Porcupine Tree, Blackfield, No-man, Bass Communion etc)-turned-solo artist, who once commented that he would "sacrifice having family for music". During our chat his dog, Bowie, curls up at his side and we get a glimpse of his record collection (well, some of it) towering on shelves behind him. At one point he steps out to receive a huge delivery of… erm, squirrel feed. He looks happy. Most recently he's released his sixth solo album, *The Future Bites*. A marriage of whip-smart electronics and classy pop songs, it explores ideas about self-obsession, self-identity and consumerism in the modern age.

IN MUSIC THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS GENRE.

I've always been very committed to this idea of listening across genres, everything from ABBA to Karlheinz Stockhausen. Tim [Bowness] was very influential to me in terms of my listening taste, my overall philosophy on life. I first met him when I was eighteen or nineteen. He was a couple of years older. What I loved about Tim is that we could enthuse about Donovan as easily as we could about industrial metal. And that carried over into the studio, so in the same session we might do this beautiful ambient piece and then this industrial noisy funk. It took us a couple of years to find our style, but in the early years we were just experimenting in all different styles. It's kind of been my philosophy ever since.

"I've always been very committed to this idea of listening across genres."

I'M A CHILD OF THE EIGHTIES.

I started with posters of *Dark Side Of The Moon* on my wall, because my dad had a copy of it. But when I got into music in the eighties Prince was my pride-of-place poster, probably in my mid-teens. I used to see Marillion a lot in their early days. I must have had a Marillion poster at some point. But certainly as a teenager it would have been The Smiths, Prince, and I think I had a David Sylvian poster at the time.

WE TURN INTO OUR PARENTS, SORT OF.

My mother was always very open-minded. Still is. She's ninety years old and she goes to the theatre, and she'll buy the books that get the best reviews. My dad was like that too, in terms of the eclectic music they listened to when I was a kid. There was that kind of curiosity about music, cinema, literature, painting and all these things. The downside is that I also inherited an incredibly reserved shyness from my parents. Which is not a bad quality in itself, but it's something you have to overcome if you're ever going to step on stage. I spent the first ten years of my career on stage literally looking at my shoes because I couldn't look the audience in the eye. That is something I get from my family. They are very shy, very reserved people.

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH PROG ROCK HAD UNLIKELY ORIGINS.

My father was an electronics engineer. He was kind of a genius, and he worked for many companies over the years, including EMI, Decca and Pi, developing technology. In fact a lot of my ability to learn how to be a producer was facilitated by my dad making me little four-tracks, echo machines and homemade sequencers. And he would always get things slightly wrong, because he wasn't a musician himself. So he built me this sequencer. Of course most music is made in four-time and three. He didn't know that, so he built me a nine-step sequencer [laughs], so all the songs I wrote had to be in nine/eight! Maybe this is one of the reasons I ended up being so fascinated with progressive rock and more complex music.

THE INTERNET HAS MADE US LESS CURIOUS ABOUT THE WORLD.

The human race has evolved in quite an unexpected way because of the internet and social media. It's really changed the way we engage with the world. There's a line in the song *Self* [on *The Future Bites*] which for me is one of the key lines on the record: '*Self sees a billion stars, but still can only self-regard*.' It's this idea that we used to look out at the universe with curiosity, and now we spend most of our life looking at this tiny little screen on our phone to see how many likes we've got on our latest Facebook post. The human race has gone from regarding the world in a very broad way, to regarding the world through the prism of social media, and seeing themselves reflected back through that prism.

WE'RE ENTERING THE DYSTOPIA PREDICTED BY SCIENCE FICTION.

I don't believe we understand exactly what long-term effect the technology we've created is going to have on our species. I think in some ways we are fulfilling that kind of dystopian image that science-fiction writers from the mid-twentieth century were writing about – how one day the technology

Wilson with his one-off Ultra Deluxe box set of latest album *The Future Bites*, selling price 10 grand (the money going to charity Music Venue Trust).

Porcupine Tree circa 2002: (l-r) Gavin Harrison, Richard Barbieri, Steven Wilson, Colin Edwin.

we had created would be our undoing. And I think we're beginning to live through that era now. It's very scary to see that happening in my lifetime. When I was a kid I used to read stories by Arthur C Clarke, Thomas Disch and Philip K Dick, which were about these ideas that one day technology would render the human race obsolete. In a sense the only thing they got wrong is what form that technology would take. A lot of them imagined robots and things like that. In fact the technology, to some extent, is social media.

SOCIAL MEDIA ISN'T ALL BAD.

I am a professional musician, operating in 2020; I *have* to be on social media. So in that sense I have to love it. But there is the other side of it. It creates a platform for misinformation, fake news, self-obsession, ignorance, hatred… But at the same time it also creates this incredible opportunity for connection, communication and education. My worry is that that's not the way some human beings choose to engage with it.

> **"When I look back at my career I see it as this process of evolving and learning."**

TO BE YOUNG NOW IS TO BE EXCITED BY URBAN MUSIC AND MODERN POP.

As a child now, you're brought up in a world where you simply do not hear rock music, unless you search for it. We live in a world where we're constantly surrounded by electronic sounds, whether it's coming from our laptop, our phone, our doorbell… We're surrounded by the vocabulary of electronic music. So if I was growing up in an era where there wasn't this rock musical vocabulary, of course I'm gonna be more interested in electronic music. If you listen to Billie Eilish or Kendrick Lamarr, some of the production and ideas are really fresh and innovative. I imagine I would be drawn to that world if I was a kid now.

CDS GET A BAD RAP.

I love 'em. I still think for some kinds of music CDs are so much better than records: ambient music, classical music, any music where silence and space is a key part. One of my pet peeves is people who just dismiss CDs as an obsolete format. And I still buy a lot of books, I still buy a lot of movies on Blu-ray. I've got a really nice cinema room in my house, and my wife and I really enjoy watching movies on Blu-ray, surround-sound and everything.

NOSTALGIA IS COMFORTING, ESPECIALLY AS YOU GET OLDER.

I've found as I've gotten older I've become very nostalgic for surrounding myself with the things from my childhood. So the other day I bought a *Mary Mungo & Midge* album. It was a BBC children's programme, probably from the late seventies [1969], and somebody posted a picture of the album on Instagram, and I decided I had to have it! And the other day I bought myself a photo-print for the studio of *The Avengers* – Dianna Rigg and Patrick Macnee. It's comforting to buy things that remind you of your own childhood. So I buy a lot of crap.

SERIAL KILLERS ARE FASCINATING BECAUSE THEY ARE PART OF THE HUMAN RACE.

The first time I heard music that actually made me physically sick, in a good way, was Throbbing Gristle's *Second Annual Report*. I was about fifteen years old. The first song on that record is *Slug Bait*, and it's a really sick, lo-fi electronic noise piece, with Genesis P-Orridge intoning over the top a story about a murderer who breaks into the bedroom of a woman and cuts her

"This one's in nine-eight. I want to see you dance!"

unborn baby out of her stomach. It was the beginning of serial killer chic. I grew up in a house where my mum had a lot of books about serial killers, so I was already a little bit influenced by her in my interest in that world.

[*CR*: Do you enjoy that feeling of being unsettled by art?]

I really do. Or at least I really *did*. I don't like the torture-porn films; that movie *A Serbian Film*, I can't say I enjoyed it. I like the idea of true horror, but only if it's in relation to a great idea, if it has something to say about the human condition. And of course the thing about serial killers, it is horrible but it's also part of our society. They are people that have malfunctioned for whatever reason. I find that fascinating because of what it says about the human race in general, what it says about childhood and upbringing.

FLYING IS MY BIGGEST FEAR.

It's gotten worse. Perhaps it's as I've got older and closer to death, without putting too fine a point on it, I'm more aware of my own mortality. I'm thinking I'm going to have to have some sort of hypnosis or therapy to get through the next period of touring. Coping mechanisms, I've tried them all. I've tried tapping; you tap certain parts of your body and you have different mantras you say. It sounds very new-age-y, I know, but I'm at this point where I'll try anything! Sleeping pills obviously, though it's not the best thing to do to your body. Neither is getting blind drunk.

TEL AVIV IS A GREAT PLACE.

In a way I felt like the missing part of my personality was completed when I went to Israel [for a year while working on the second Blackfield album with Aviv Geffen]. I became more confident, more outgoing, more joyful. The Israeli people are the complete antithesis of that shyness I inherited from my parents. It was everything I wasn't. They are very forward, they're not polite, which I love, they say what they mean and you make friends almost instantly. They're very volatile people; my wife is completely furious or she's completely joyous. I'm a lot closer to that now than I used to be, because of the influence of Israel.

And Tel Aviv's a wonderful city. There's music and cinema and all this tradition. A lot of it's in Hebrew, so it doesn't cross over to our world, but they have a very rich culture. They're a very small country surrounded by people who don't want them there, and that gives them a very unique seize-the-day kind of perspective on life, which I adore.

NOT CARING WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK TAKES ALMOST A LIFETIME TO ACHIEVE.

The best thing about getting older, for me, is that I don't care what other people think any more. I'm not sure that I ever did. No, that's not true, I did. When I started in the industry with Tim all those years ago, we tried to make music that we thought would give us a career, financial stability in the music industry. I'm glad it didn't work, because it taught us a lesson. And as I get older I find that, particularly with an album like *The Future Bites*, which is almost guaranteed to cause controversy within my existing fan base, not only do I not care, but I actually *like* it that some people hate it. I've got to the point where I've confidence that most of my fans will go with me on this journey. That's a wonderfully privileged place to be in.

I'VE YET TO MAKE MY MASTERPIECE.

When I look back at my career I see it as this process of evolving and learning. I know the fans will disagree, but I think every record I make is better than the record I've made previously. That's the way I always want to feel. That's what keeps me going. Yes, there are albums where I think: "Yeah, that was a really good record" – *In Absentia*, *Fear Of A Blank Planet*, the first Blackfield album… – but I still think I can do better. *Hand. Cannot. Erase*, *Insurgentes*, *The Future Bites*, these stand above the others, for me.

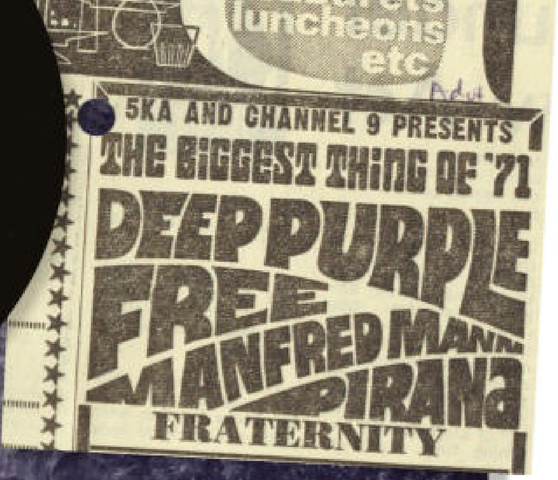
MAKE MUSIC BECAUSE YOU LOVE IT.

If you're a kid starting out in music, do it because you love it. If a career comes of it, fantastic. But don't make that the reason you do it.

The Future Bites is available now via Caroline International.

TOP: GETTY

Rehearsing in the basement of Hamish Henry's City Motors.



Fraternity promo photo: (l-r) John Freeman, Mick Jurd, Bon Scott, John Bissett, Bruce Howe.

Down Under Pressure

Before Bon Scott became a star with AC/DC, he sang with rising Aussie rockers **Fraternity**. Following the release of a new box set from the band, his old mates from those days tell their story.

Words: **Jerry Ewing**

"He was up for anything, Bon. His nickname was 'Ronnie Roadtest', a hard-drinking, hard-smoking, rootin', tootin' rock'n'roll soldier. That was his public image. It was true of him too. But at the same time he'd be the guy going round in the morning asking if you wanted a cup of tea. He was a genuinely nice fella. He just happened to be a rock star. He had no pretensions. A decent bloke who loved to party."

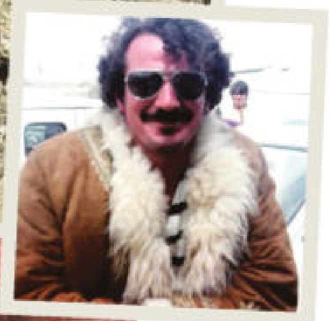
Sam See, guitarist and pianist with Australian prog/country rockers Fraternity, is reminiscing about the Adelaide band's most famous member, Bon Scott, who sang and also played recorder (yes, recorder) with them between 1970 and '73. For years now, the memory of Scott has tended to overshadow the achievements of Fraternity. A slew of unofficial reissues that appeared following his tragic death in February 1980 have often been credited incorrectly to 'Bon Scott's Fraternity', the band themselves a mere footnote in the larger story of AC/DC, with whom Scott would find fame and fortune after he joined them in 1974.

That history is now being corrected thanks to a new three-CD box set, *Seasons Of Change: The Complete Recordings 1970-1974*, on Cherry Red. It's an intriguing tale that takes in the likes of Black Sabbath, Status Quo, Geordie, Cold Chisel and Jimmy Barnes along the way, although musically it's a far cry from the hard driving rock that Scott would make with AC/DC.

The box set is very much a labour of love for 29-year-old Fraternity fan Victor Marshall, who has painstakingly pieced it together, unearthing a hitherto unknown treasure trove of Fraternity ephemera. Working alongside Fraternity's early manager and head of Adelaide music set-up The Grape Organisation, Hamish Henry, Marshall has overseen the remastering of Fraternity's two albums, the aforementioned *Livestock*, and 1972's *Flaming Galah*, released respectively on the Sweet Peach and RCA labels. The icing on *Seasons Of Change*'s sumptuous cake is a third disc, *Second Chance*, which updates the Fraternity story with long-lost session tapes and live recordings.

"Some of the pictures in the booklet I had never seen before, exclaims John Freeman, Fraternity's drummer from 1971 to '74. "The remastered audio is like taking a blanket off the speakers. It has been a labour of love for Victor to devote so much time and effort into it. Without him none of this would ever have happened. Everyone in the band is impressed. I think this is the first release since 1972 to actually represent our work properly. In the past, other people have put Fraternity compilations

MAIN: COURTESY HAMISH HENRY; GO SET: VICTOR MARSHALL; RAVEN, WELFARE SINGLE/REHEARSING: HAMISH HENRY



Bon Scott on recorder, and on wheelbarrow on the farm at Myponga. Inset: Fraternity manager Hamish Henry.

WINDSOR LIVE: JOHN FREEMAN; DEEP PURPLE, FREE, MANFRED MANN CONCERT ADVERTISMENT: HAMISH HENRY; BON: RECORDER PHILIP MORRIS; SEASON OF CHANGE SINGLE: DENIS WHITBURN

together without the band's involvement. Victor has allowed the band to take part in the entire process every step of the way. Victor takes into account our thoughts and feelings on how the work should be represented. We couldn't ask for a better set."

"It was pretty much a dream come true," enthuses Marshall, who has written the band's official biography, due to be published later this year, and contributes in-depth notes and interviews to the accompanying booklet. "I met some of the band at the South Australian Music Awards, and then tracked down others, and wives and girlfriends. Through that I met Hamish, who's quite a character. When he first showed me his archive he said I had about an hour to go through. Fortunately later on he gave me much more time."

Seasons Of Change sheds light on a fascinating period for not just Bon Scott's pre-AC/DC career, but also Australian rock music in general. The late 60s and early 70s is an era that tends to get overlooked. Seminal national Australian television music show *Countdown*, a major player in the development of the careers of bands such as Skyhooks, Sherbet, the Ted Mulry Gang and AC/DC, didn't begin broadcasting until 1974, and there was no real media spotlight. As the local music progressed from the crooners and rock'n'roll copyists of the 1950s, such as Johnny O'Keefe, through beat-inspired groups like The Easybeats and the early Bee Gees, a rock scene developed in which burgeoning acts such as Buffalo, Bakery, Chain, Blackfeather and Fraternity amalgamated the progressive rock, hard rock and country rock sounds drifting over from America and the UK.

"We could have remained in Australia, but we took the risk and attempted to achieve what every Australian band dreamed of – overseas success."
John Freeman

Fraternity formed in Sydney from the ashes of 60s R&B pop group Levi Smith's Clefs. At the same time, Bon Scott had been making a name for himself as one of two singers in Perth beat outfit The Valentines, the other being his close friend Vince Lovegrove. The Valentines, who had moved to Melbourne, long the epicentre of Australia's music scene, and who'd had hits with *My Old Man's A Groovy Old Man* and *Juliette*, were on the verge of collapse.

Bassist Bruce Howe, who spearheaded the departure from Levi Smith's Clefs alongside guitarist Mick Jurd, keyboard player John Bissett and drummer Tony Buettel, was looking for a singer to enable him and Bissett to concentrate on their playing. Step forward Bon Scott – and his trusty recorder!

"What was getting really hard was for John and I to carry the singing on our own and playing as well," Howe recalls. "I got better at it as the years went by, but it was very, very hard right then and there. When Bon got up to sing with us I just felt really relaxed again."

The band were already a feature on the Sydney live circuit, and secured a deal with local label Sweet Peach. By the time the label pushed them into the studio to record a debut album, drummer Buettel had been replaced by John Freeman, who the band knew from his stint as a music journalist for Adelaide paper *The News*.

"Fraternity was influenced by prog artists such as King Crimson early on, which is why the first album *Livestock* has some prog-rock style songs," Freeman explains. "But we quickly became heavily influenced by other acts like The Band; a lot of our songs developed a country/folk sound. Later we added new members John Eyers on harmonica and Sam See on slide guitar and piano. Our manager, Hamish Henry, purchased the band new equipment when we moved to Adelaide, and that also changed the band's sound."

1971 was a big year for Fraternity. Not only was their debut album *Livestock* released, but they also scored a minor national hit with the single *Seasons Of Change*, and at the beginning of the year they appeared alongside Black Sabbath, Daddy Cool, Billy Thorpe And The Aztecs, Company Caine and Chain at the Myponga Pop Festival. It was another step up for the band of whom Vince Lovegrove, writing for Australian music paper *Go-Set*, would say: "Together this six-piece group will broaden the horizons of pop in Australia."

"The album didn't sound anything like we did live," Freeman says now. "Those studios were pretty primitive at the time."

"I wasn't into recording *Livestock* at all," Howe sniffs. "We owed Sweet Peach because they spent all that money on us, sending us up to putting us up in a house."

Rough around the edges the *Livestock* album might be, but it is not without charm. *Raglan's Folly*, a song inspired by the Charge Of The Light Brigade, Mick Jurd's *Grand Canyon Suites*, *Jupiter Landscape* and an enterprising cover of the Moody Blues' *Question* play the prog-rock hand, while the jaunty title track and the excellent *Somerville* ▷

"Gis a light, mate." Jim Stewart, John Freeman and Bruce Howe recording the *Livestock* album at United Sound Studios in 1970.

Bon Scott and Bruce Howe in the kitchen at their home on Jersey Road, Sydney.

show an adeptness at Little Feat-style country rock. Above it all, Scott's pre-AC/DC voice soars, although the impish character that would soon make itself much more well known is present. Several of the songs from the debut would be rearranged and re-recorded on Fraternity's second album, the brilliantly titled *Flaming Galah*.

The same year, the band also moved lock, stock and barrel into a farm in Aldgate in the Adelaide Hills.

"Initially the entire band lived there, but after a while Bon and Bruce moved back to the city where John Bissett lived with his family," says Freeman. "The property at Aldgate was large, with a lake, and cottage where Mick [Jurd] and his wife Carol lived. There was a violent goat called Archie, and sometimes John Bissett's dog Clutch. Bon would often ride (or crash) his Suzuki 250 bike around the property."

Fraternity rounded off an excellent year in some style, by winning the national Hoadley's Battle Of The Sounds's competition, in which they pipped Sherbet in a gig at the Melbourne Festival Hall. The prize would finance Fraternity's new album, and offer the band the opportunity to visit the UK. But what should have been the major step to stardom would ultimately be their undoing.

Sherbet founder member Sam See, already a friend of the band, joined Fraternity in 1971, bolstering the line-up to a seven-piece for *Flaming Galah*. Although he didn't perform with them at Hoadley's, he has definite ideas that the course of action Fraternity took after their victory in the competition was not the right one.

> **"Bon was a great mate, just another one of the guys."**
> **John Freeman**

"It didn't have a hope, in retrospect. A beginning-of-the-end moment," he says. "I often say I was in Fraternity in 1971 and for twenty-three years in London in 1972. It was the longest year of my life. Australians weren't very popular there in those days. We had a terrible year. The band lost its mojo."

"We could have remained in Australia, but we took the risk and attempted to achieve what every Australian band dreamed of – overseas success," says Freeman. "Although times became tough and we didn't achieve the outcome we had dreamed of, I still look back at our time in England with fondness."

The highlight of a trip that would prove to be the undoing of the band was supposed to be supporting Status Quo. In reality it was the trips to Germany, where they supported UK glam-rock band Geordie, that left a more lasting impression.

"We played with Quo in Bournemouth," See recalls. "We arrived in our bus and we're sat waiting outside the venue, and these two Bentleys pull up and it's the Quo, dressed in King's Road finery. We're being Aussie bogans, laughing at them, and we do our show and we're like: 'Follow that.' And of course when it's their turn they turned the rest of the PA on, changed into their denims and annihilated us. They were fantastic."

It was as a member of Fraternity that Scott stumbled across the man who would later replace him in AC/DC: Brian Johnson, the singer with Geordie.

"It's odd isn't it," See says, smiling. "They were friendly blokes. He was a bit younger than the rest of them. Of course no one ever gave it any thought until years later."

The pressures of relocating to England began to take their toll on the band. Bissett and See quit, the others briefly changing their name to Fang in the hope of broadening their appeal to the glam-rock crowd. It didn't work, and by the time the band members returned to Australia in 1973 Fraternity were effectively done.

Scott would hook up with the Mount Lofty Rangers, during which time he was hospitalised after a fateful motorbike accident, which eventually led to him getting involved with AC/DC (he'd previously met older Young brother George while a member of The Valentines). John Freeman would drum during Scott's very first jams with Angus and Malcolm Young.

Fraternity performed, on and off throughout the 70s and 80s, sometimes under different names such as Some Dream and Mickey Finn, with later line-ups featuring a youthful Jimmy Barnes and his brother John Swan from Cold Chisel. Now the spotlight has landed back on the band's achievements, there's talk of a 50th-anniversary celebration this year, covid permitting.

But it's still the memory of singer Bon Scott, the lovable larrikin who became a world-famous rock star, that evokes the fondest memories for his former Fraternity bandmates.

"He looked everyone up on his last trip to Australia before he went back to London," See recalls. "I always thought that was a bit spooky. He said to me he'd had enough of the whole circus. By that point they'd had enough success that he could buy a pub and just rock out locally. I dunno."

"Bon was a great mate, just another one of the guys," smiles Freeman. "We all still miss him."

Seasons Of Change – The Complete Recordings 1970-1974 is out now via Cherry Red.

MAIN: COURTESY BRUCE HOWE; BON/BRUCE & BON PLAYING FOOTBALL: PHILIP MORRIS; RECORDING JOHN FREEMAN; STICKER: HAMISH HENRY

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Okay, so 2021 hasn't quite got off to the arse-kicking start we'd all hoped for. Lockdown living has resumed. Perhaps you're reading this with your kids/partner/dog/Zoom account making themselves known – in delightful or disastrous ways – in the background. Maybe you're just wondering, as probably we all are, what the hell will happen next. If only there was some new music to get excited about…

Oh, wait, there is! Lots of it, as a matter of fact. And we're pleased to show off some choice cuts right here. So whether it's funky floor fillers you're looking for (try the Moon City Masters), hooky garage rock'n'roll (say hello to Swedish kids Hot Breath), quality power pop-rock (such as The Middlenight Men and The Lickerish Quartet), or homegrown hard rock (new single from The Dust Coda, anyone?), we've got it covered. Plus a whole load more besides. Some reasons to be cheerful, for sure.

Check out more tips, and vote for your favourite every Monday, at loudersound.com with *Classic Rock*'s Tracks Of The Week.

The Dead Deads

Hey Girlfriend

Nashville ain't just about country, and hasn't been for a while. So check out its messier, punkier side with The Dead Deads and their 90s-tastic home run of a single, *Hey Girlfriend*. If Weezer and Sonic Youth had a baby (and fed it an alt.cocktail of grunge, indie and punk) it would sound a lot like this. Plus it's super-catchy, and powered by some monster riffage. Sound good? Keep your ears out for their new album this year.

Find out more at *thedeaddeads.com*

DeWolff
Yes You Do

Dutch trio DeWolff's last album, *Tascam Tapes*, was written on the road for less than 50 euros ("but it sounds like a million bucks!" the publicity material quipped). Now, having locked themselves away in their canal-side studio bunker in the medieval town of Utrecht, high-voltage rock'n'roll has resumed. *Yes You Do* is a hard-grooving, Hammond-whirling delight that kicks off new studio album *Wolffpack* (see what they did there?), which will be yours to buy very soon (from February 5). If you're in the market for some rich yet sparky nostalgia, check it out.
Find out more at *www.dewolff.nu/#/home*

Moon City Masters *Takin' It Back*

Brooklyn's all-singing, all-harmonising twin brothers are getting a second bite of the Hot List cherry, having nailed this gleaming humdinger of a funk-fest. Built on a groove so danceable it'll set even the least rhythmic of toes a-tapping – and packed with more joy and sunshine than we have any right to expect at this time of year – *Takin' It Back* has rocked, popped and shimmied its way straight into our hearts. Try it on for size.
Find out more at *www.mooncitymasters.com*

Hot Breath *Bad Feeling*

These young Gothenburg garage rockers make the sort of hooky, happy-drunk racket that evokes memories of low-ceilinged club gigs and really good house parties. Fun, fast and charismatic as hell, *Bad Feeling* has everything we want from good-time rock'n'roll (think 70s London and 00s Detroit in a mixer with caffeine and chocolate), singer/guitarist Jennifer Israelsson blazing their trail with an easy blend of swagger and vivacity.
Find out more at *www.facebook.com/hotbreathgbg*

HOT BREATH: ANDERS BERGSTEDT/PRESS; DEWOLFF: SATELLITE JUNE

The Quins
Wild Ones

The Quins are from Boston (Massachusetts, not Lincolnshire), and promise to "resurrect classic rock back from the vinyl cemetery to modern-day iPod libraries". We'd normally be a bit sniffy about such overt displays of self-proclaimed genius, but *Wild Ones* is so good – it rocks, it funks and it power-pops, all with style and panache – that we won't. And the sinister, narcotic-drenched video (check it out on YouTube) is ace.

Find out more at *www.thequinsband.com*

Bonavega *Ladyman*

You'll either love this or hate it (read: you'll probably love it). Former *America's Got Talent* star Bonavega's lip-smacking single has everything: big riffs, synths, a colossal chorus and a heart to match. It's the sound of Def Leppard, Queen and Lady Gaga at an 80s-themed drag night, having the best time ever. The underlying message – well, not so much 'underlying' as written in large neon letters – is 'Be who you are', and own it, gender stereotypes and societal norms be damned.

Find out more at *bonavegamusic.com*

Brothers In Exile *Last Orders*

We've been attuned to Welsh Foos-esque rockers Sonny Jim for a while now (*Classic Rock*'s Grant Moon plays bass for them these days, but that hasn't put us off). Most recently, the band's guitarist Lloyd Jenkins has hooked up with Stu Calder – a man he describes as "the Lenny Kravitz of Cheltenham" – to form Brothers In Exile. They recorded *Last Orders* together in a brief window between lockdowns, and it's a cracker; boisterous and addictive with a Wildhearts-y drive.

Find out more at *soundcloud.com/user-685919022*

THE QUINS: ERIK FRALICK/PRESS; BONAVEGA: SARAH PARDINI/PRESS

Who Are The Snuts?

Brimming with confidence, they're determined to not be like any other band that came before them.

Describe your sound in a sentence?
Jack Cochrane (singer/guitarist): Honey-glazed modern rock'n'roll.

Where did you all meet?
The dark lands of the broken Scottish school system.

Let's talk influences: who are your go-to guitar heroes as a band?
Bob Dylan, Justin Vernon, Alex Turner, Bakithi Kumalo, James Jamerson, Geezer Butler, John Martyn, Ben Howard, John Frusciante, to name a few.

And who has the best voice in rock'n'roll?
John Lennon.

What was the defining moment in The Snuts' life so far?
Selling out three nights at the world-renowned Barrowland Ballroom in Glasgow.

When gigs are finally allowed to take place again, what can people expect from a Snuts show?
A post-modern, production-filled extravaganza; a show that pushes the boundaries of a standard indie rock'n'roll gig. A potent reminder of why we are all so madly in love with live music.

What can the band members do besides music?
Between the four of us we could probably build a house from start to finish, I reckon.

What's next for The Snuts?
Our Debut LP, titled '*WL*', is to be released in March. It is a collection of milestones and melodies that time-stamp our dreams becoming a reality. The record should break the stigma of what it means to be an indie band in the UK.

The Snuts
Always

Young Scots The Snuts have their sights set on big stages (they're currently due to play sold-out shows this year at London's Kentish Town Forum and Glasgow's Barrowland), as this brooding, expansive piece of contemporary rock shows.

"We don't like the safe lane," says Jack Cochrane, the curly-haired singer, guitarist and songwriter, who formed the band when he was 15. "We've never wanted to be like any band who came before us. What's the point in that?"

Want to hear the full results of this confidence? Check out their debut full-length album, out in March.

Find out more at *www.thesnuts.co.uk*

The Dust Coda *Limbo Man*

The latest fresh meat signed to Earache Records (home of Blackberry Smoke, Massive Wagons and Those Damn Crows, among many others), The Dust Coda have wasted no time in stepping up to the plate (and getting themselves some snazzy new jackets, as the photo above shows) with this muscle-bound injection of shotgun guitars, soul-caked heft and menacing intent. If you like what you hear, their new album *Mojo Skyline* is out in March.

Find out more at *thedustcoda.com*

THE SNUTS: GARY WILLIAMSON/PRESS; THE DUST CODA: DEAN CHALKLEY/PRESS

The Middlenight Men *Rat Star*

This Technicolor superhero collective (headed up by sessioneer and former Yo-Yos/Love Zombies/Duncan Reid And The Bigheads man Nick Hughes) featured in this magazine's High Hopes pages last year, and now their hotly tipped album *Issue 1* arrives on February 12. In anticipation, we're drawing your attention to *Rat Star*, a strident power-pop-rock glitterbomb, and the album's opening track (didn't someone say you should put your cherries on top? Well this is one big cherry). If the sweet yet spiky workings of Ginger Wildheart float your boat, you'll love it (imagine The Wildhearts roaming free with Eureka Machines at Disneyland, and you're in the right ballpark).
Find out more at *themiddlenightmen.com*

The Lickerish Quartet
Snollygoster Goon

Anyone missing the sweet yet sharp-edged power-pop of Jellyfish would do well to acquaint themselves with The Lickerish Quartet. Not least because it comprises three 'Fish alumni: Roger Manning, Eric Dover and Tim Smith. *Snollygoster Goon* (yes it's a weird name, but since when did these fellas do anything the obvious, route-one way?) delivers the sort of bullet-proof songcraft and addictive eccentricity, with a subtly macabre underbelly, that will carry you through winter with a smile on your face. Or a half-smile at least, but sometimes those are the most meaningful.
Find out more at *thelickerishquartet.com*

And Keep An Ear Out For
Mammoth WVH

Few new faces in rock have bigger shoes to fill than Wolfgang Van Halen. So far he has more than surpassed expectations, if you go by the evidence of *Distance* – the first single to be released from his solo band Mammoth WVH, it's a beautiful, heartfelt ode to his late father Eddie. You can practically hear the world gasp, and maybe even tear up a bit – "Okay, so the guy can write a song, *and* play, *and* really sing…" – especially when he goes into a higher register in the chorus. To say that Eddie would have been incredibly proud seems trite, but it's true.
Find out more at www.mammothwvh.com

THE LICKERISH QUARTET: JAY GILBERT/PRESS. MAMMOTH WVH: TRAVIS SHINN/PRESS

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Curved Air
"Come on feel the noise." Madly eclectic prog pioneers' studio output boxed up.

The Hard Stuff
The Ultimate Rock Reviews Section

12 PAGES 100% ROCK

Classic Rock Ratings

- A Classic
- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Above Average
- Average
- Below Par
- A Disappointment
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Edited By Ian Fortnam
ian.fortnam@futurenet.com

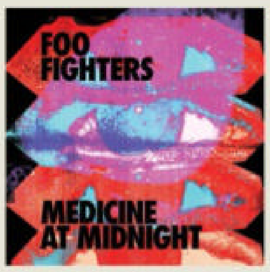
GETTY

THE HARD STUFF ALBUMS

DANNY CLINCH/PRESS

Foo Fighters

Medicine At Midnight RCA



Grohl's tightest set yet, with supernatural aid.

Dave Grohl has spent the past decade scouring the US for his own spirit. He made 2011's *Wasting Light* in his garage to try to recapture his teenage exuberance, 2014's *Sonic Highways* in a variety of America's most storied studios to try to borrow their mythology, and 2017's *Concrete And Gold* in California's spiritual Shangri-la Ojai, as if looking within himself for rock enlightenment. Along the way he's worked with such luminaries as Justin Timberlake, Alison Mosshart and Ben Gibbard, with Eagles and Beatles and Cheap Tricks, in the hope of crossing the sonic streams. For tenth album *Medicine At Midnight*, recorded pre-lockdown, he's even ventured beyond the physical realm, recording in a nearby haunted house with, he claims, poltergeists adjusting the pedal-board levels overnight.

Ironically, it's injected new life into Foo Fighters. Where *Concrete And Gold* was an unspoken homage to the pivotal rock records of the late 60s and 70s (Motörhead's *Sgt Pepper*, Grohl intended), *Medicine At Midnight* is his most future-facing album of recent years. Locked out of the singles charts in the streaming age, many rock acts have courted pop audiences of late, attempting to remain competitive (Smashing Pumpkins, The Killers). Foo Fighters are equally ambitious. They hired Sia and P!nk's producer Greg Kurstin to add flecks of contemporary titanium to *Concrete*, and last April Grohl happily murdered *Times Like These* alongside Dua Lipa and Jess Glynne for charity. *Medicine*, however, melts modern pop textures into Grohl's trademark grunge-pop ballast with panache, and inspires some of his most infectious choruses since the 90s. *Shame Shame* gilds a canyon rock core with piston R&B beats, hand claps and soulful asides; *Making A Fire* resembles a catchy collaboration between AC/DC and TLC; and the verses of the funksome title track could have fallen off *Thriller*.

As a result, the nine tracks (36 minutes) of *Medicine At Midnight* slip down easy. It's the zippiest Foos album to date, and largely unburdened by the dark-times politicising that thickened *Concrete*. What's more, it reassures its rock base as it goes; the pure fireball rock of *No Son Of Mine* and *Holding Poison* burn out the album's early funk tendrils at the root, mid-paced ballad *Chasing Birds* couldn't be more *Imagine* if it had an emotionless Yoko on vibes, and the record closes with one of the most euphoric anthems about the pointlessness of relationships ever recorded. As a modern rock melting pot, *Medicine* certainly sounds like a spirit rediscovered.

Mark Beamont

W.E.T.

Retransmission FRONTIERS

Come on in, the water's W.E.T. and warm.

W.E.T. understand the value of keeping their powder dry. While many in the melodic hard rock genre increasingly prioritise quantity above quality, *Retransmission* is just the fourth studio album in this band's 12-year career. Any rebooting of the partnership of keyboard player and guitarist Robert Säll (whose group Work Of Art supply the 'W' in W.E.T.), Eclipse guitarist Erik Mårtensson and vocalist Jeff Scott Soto (acknowledged here for his contribution to Talisman) will always be worth waiting for, and, sure enough, *Retransmission* is a dead cert for those 'best of 2021' lists.

The zeal and passion with which W.E.T. dispatch opener *Big Boys Don't Cry* must be heard to be believed, and once they up the pace slightly with the crunchier yet equally dizzying *The Moment Of Truth*, all bets are off. As closer *One Final Kiss*, fades away, just two words are written in this reviewer's notepad: "Ludicrously good".

Dave Ling

Lucero

When You Found Me

THIRTY TIGERS

Just like going to the movies.

Twenty-plus years into their country-punk career and Memphis's Lucero make this follow-up to 2018's *Among The Ghosts* sound just so damn easy. Like the portentous soundtrack to some gothic southern film noir, *When You Found Me* simply drips dark cinematic charm.

Book-ended by menacing slow-burning opener *Have You Lost Your Way* and the delicate acoustic shimmer of the title track, the album travels full circle through themes revolving around family, loss, redemption, Irish folktales and mainman Ben Nichols's daughter's bedtime fairy stories, with Nichols's whisky-ravaged drawl sounding absolutely perfect on *Outrun The Moon, Coffin Nails, Good As Gone, The Match* and *All My Life*, all compelling minor-key dramas packed with musical detail and heavy tension.

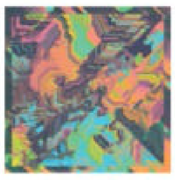
When You Found Me combines top-notch musicianship and expert songcraft with bags of brooding atmosphere, with Lucero clearly at the top of their southern-rocking game.

Essi Berelian

Psychedelic Porn Crumpets

SHYGA! The Sunlight Mound MARATHON ARTISTS

Worlds collide in a cornucopia of multi-coloured sound.



At first glance it would be easy to dismiss Psychedelic Porn Crumpets as some kind of elaborate joke sent over from the former colonies. For sure, their name suggests the results of a three-day bender, while the music – an amalgam of psychedelia, prog, space rock and punk all concocted and mixed in a garage that possibly doubles up as an after-hours LSD lab – can overwhelm and bamboozle. And yet, for all that, there's plenty here to enjoy and savour once the reorientation of the senses has been achieved.

The fourth album from these Aussies gallops at a breathless pace, its 14 tracks crashing into one other with scant regard for personal safety. Peeling away the layers, it's easy to see why. *Tally-Ho*'s celebration of irresponsible hedonism ('*One more line of avalanche winterland handicap, bleeding from the nostril*') is evoked brilliantly by a well-drilled band adept at firing off twisting riffs and spluttering time signatures. Elsewhere *Glitter Bug* evokes Yes, albeit compressed from a Topographic Ocean into a sparkling nugget.

Exuberant throughout, PPC's trip has notched up a gear.

Julian Marszalek

The Telescopes

Songs Of Love And Revolution TAPETE

Kaleidoscopic dream-pop.

Some bands don't disappear, but instead drift deep and deeper into the ether, turning up strange new minutiae, odd crawling shapes; far and further they go, fuelled by their own twisted obsessions and a sideboard full of Velvet Underground rarities and whispered rumours of My Bloody Valentine reunions.

If it doesn't feel right framing

Stephen Lawrie's Telescopes and their drifting kaleidoscopic dream-pop in terms of other bands, it's because they have so clearly distilled and refined their own sound long ago: hidden, spooky, mesmeric, a secret gardening of secret delights. So much so that this, their twelfth album in a 30-year career, can only really be described as 'The Telescopes'.

You couldn't call it ravishing (although the way the guitars trickle and scratch over sepulchral bass on *Come Bring Your Love* before exploding in distortion certainly is). It is, however, an unbidden delight: hypnotic, breathtaking and quite, quite beautiful.

Everett True

Transatlantic

The Absolute Universe: Forevermore INSIDEOUT

Acclaimed proggers go for broke on fifth album.

Not content with this 90-minute double album, Transatlantic have also recorded a 60-minute version of completely different recordings of the same songs, changing lyrics, vocalists et al. It's also a concept album, concerning the world's struggles in 2020. If you've ever wondered what a prog supergroup would do during a pandemic, here's your answer, with full theses, dissertations and annotation.

And so, as the title hints, Neal Morse, Roine Stolt, Mike Portnoy and Pete Trewavas take us on a journey through the tropes of modern, technically flawless AOR-tinted prog, the playing proficient, the soul of it elusive. It's a generous, abundant offering for loyal fans, but the casual listener might wish the band would more frequently twist instead of stick.

Chris Roberts

Lonely The Brave

The Hope List EASY LIFE

New singer signals the sky's the limit for LTB.

Conventional wisdom insists that Lonely The Brave's 15 minutes of fame are up. After a promising debut (2014's *The Day's War*), the band started to stutter with a less good second record, and live shows that were somehow both hit and miss. Then singer David Jakes left. To say their career trajectory has been uneven would be to understate it a bit.

Unshaken, the band went back to their day jobs, found a new vocalist in the enigmatic Jack Bennett, and began again. It's said that adversity instructs art. LTB's woes have been rewarded with something remarkable: their best record yet. Buoyed on the metaphorical bloody nose that is 2020, it's filled with a yearning (*Something I Said, The Hope List*) that recalls the sense of want in early Pearl Jam records, but rails and rallies (*Keeper, Bright Eyes*) like peak Foo Fighters or Biffy Clyro, suffused with soul.

Philip Wilding

Steve Hackett

Under A Mediterranean Sky INSIDEOUT

Acoustic postcards from Hackett's travels.

Steve Hackett never lacks ideas for an album. This one has the master guitarist drawing from his excursions around the Mediterranean, for an acoustic record on which he plays not only guitar but also slightly more esoteric instruments such as the oud and charango.

Joined by keyboard player Roger King, flautists Christine Townsend and John Hackett, Malik Mansurov on tar, Arsen Petrosyan on duduk, and Hackett's wife Jo helping out on vocals, Hackett weaves complex yet engaging music that evokes the romantic spirit of that part of the world.

This isn't the type of album that has to be played constantly, but one to dip into occasionally, when there's a desire to relax and lose oneself in a world far removed from the harsh realities of everyday life, with music doused in elegance and mystery.

Malcolm Dome

The Pretty Reckless

Death By Rock And Roll FEARLESS/CENTURY MEDIA

What doesn't kill you…

New Yorkers The Pretty Reckless's charmed first decade made stardom seem like their destiny. Until Chris Cornell's death nixed a support tour with Soundgarden and producer Kato Khandwala died in a bike crash.

Death By Rock And Roll is their first attempt to claw back what they had. Fortunately it's brilliant. Taylor Momsen's crew kick off on familiar turf, with the title track's mainstream sleaze, but the album soon forks left. The glowering *Only Love Can Save Me Now* bolsters its grunge vibe with cameos from Soundgarden's Matt Cameron and Kim Thayil. *And So It Went* softens into a country strum, then goes wiggy courtesy of Tom Morello. *25* is a Bond theme with a mosher holding a knife to John Barry's throat, *Got So High* is a truly lovely comedown strummer, and if someone told you *Harley Darling* had fallen off Neil Young's *Harvest* sessions you'd believe it. Resurrection complete.

Henry Yates

Drones

Our Hell Is Right Here LOCKJAW

Album number two: scorchio.

'Difficult second album' seems to be a bit of an understatement here, given the personal and practical trials and tribulations that have gone into creating *Our Hell Is Right Here*. Nevertheless, London band Drones (not to be confused with Manchester's or Australia's The Drones) have come up trumps with an album that takes the fury of debut *Exiled* and rages even harder. The acoustic *Listen* proves they can also do quiet and introspective, but for the most part it's full-tilt modern punk with post-hardcore stylings, and vocalist Lois McDougall exorcising various personal demons through her lyrics as well as taking aim at those in power. A happy album this is not, but the sharp focus of songs like *Josephine, Epitaph, Grey Matters* and the searing title track are impressive to behold. Hearts on sleeves and rocking like the proverbial bastards, Drones are the real deal.

Essi Berelian

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

By Sleazegrinder

Nerve Button: ragged rock'n'roll glory.

Nerve Button

Volume 2 WANDA

Straight outta Moncton - surely the sexiest city in New Brunswick, Canada - bursts forth the ragged rock'n'roll glory of Nerve Button. Like a good Saturday night bottling, this album is a very straightforward pummeling of hard-core 70s glam, trashy and stompy and fixing for a fight. Songs are about sex and getting kicked in the head, and that's really it, and the velocity and ferocity never lets up.

With remarkable brevity (most songs hover around two minutes or under) Nerve Button get in and out with great economy, tossing out hand-clapping, fist-pumping choruses and veering-outta-control Thunders-esque guitar solos with expert nonchalance before barrelling into the next should-be jukebox hit. Opener *Maritime Sham Glam* is so catchy it's almost offensive, and good-time thrills abound throughout, including lost-weekend jammers like *Party Zone, Queen Of The Tarts, Pink Jellybean* and the obvious star of the bunch, *Nikki Got Her Knickers Kicked*. Imagine if Slade and Rose Tattoo had a bar brawl and everybody won.

Demolition Doll Rods

Into the Brave IN THE RED

Demo Doll Rods were a sexed-up, glammed-out Detroit motorpunk institution in the 90s, known as much for their skin-tight pants as for their searing grease'n'roll. It's been 16 long years since their last album, and suddenly they burst forth outta nowhere with this entirely satisfying comeback album full of crunchy, catchy garage-gunk.

Satanic Togas

The Shit That Killed Elvis MIMETICS

These Italians stallions have a song on this cassette-only lo-fi messterpiece that really sums up the experience: *Teenage Garbage*. With a sound that makes the masking-tape recording techniques of The Mummies sound like Rush, they kick out their minute-long jams with reckless abandon, relying on feedback and pure adrenalin.

The Virginia Gentlemen

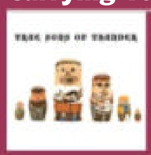
Self-titled SELF-RELEASED

THEVIRGINIAGENTLEMEN.BANDCAMP.COM

Remember all those bands from like 20 years ago with guitars chugging furiously away in a speedball garage-punk sea of fuzz and static while the singer bellows on top like a maniac? You know, Murder City Devils, Jon Spencer etc? VG have that vibe, only with rock-solid songs. Fucking excellent.

True Sons Of Thunder

It Was Then That I Was Carrying You TOTAL PUNK



Third album from Floridian crazies who clearly haven't tuned their guitars since 1998. Halfway between thrashy hardcore punk and droney Stooges/Chrome destructo-space/murder rock, this is the sound of the swamps crawling into your bed and strangling you in your sleep. Delightfully nightmarish.

Steven Wilson

The Future Bites CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL

It's Wilson versus Jeff Bezos for album six.

Everyone has a price, and for Steven Wilson it rings in at £10,000. That's what someone shelled out for a super-limited-edition box set – there's only one available – of *The Future Bites*, featuring artworks, handwritten lyrics, music unavailable anywhere else, test pressings, Wilson's Grammy nomination certificate and medal for 2011's *Grace For Drowning*, Polaroids and, not massively usefully, AAA passes for tours that have already finished. While 10 grand is clearly an insane amount of money to spend on a record, no matter how many bells and whistles it comes with, it should be noted that all proceeds go to the Music Venue Trust – so it's out there for the greater good. More pertinently, it's an artistic statement that acts as an extension of the album itself.

Wilson, like all good proggers, bloody loves a concept. His don't tend to be very cheery, and this time round, as the whopping price tag on the one-only box set suggests, he turns his pessimistic eye to our consumer culture, our self-made shopping prison, and how our every move is monitored by algorithms brought into existence purely to make us buy more *stuff*. Basically, it's an Amazon-induced panic dream.

There's plenty to like here, from the old-school futurism of *Self* to *12 Things I Forgot*, which come across like the Manic Street Preachers at their poppiest put through a Peter Gabriel filter.

The centrepiece, though, the bones on which the whole thing is built, is *Personal Shopper*, which after an atmospheric slow build explodes into a PayPal-disco rallying cry: *'Buy for comfort, buy for kicks, buy and buy until it makes you sick… buy the shit you never knew you lacked.'* Then, just as you get a handle on it all, in one of the most inspired guest appearances in recent years, and displaying an admirable level of self-awareness, Mastercard's favourite knight of the realm Elton John turns up and starts ominously listing everything you could be popping into your cart in order to achieve that empty high: *'Deluxe edition box sets… volcanic ash soap… anti-ageing cream… noise-cancelling headphones… self-esteem…'*

Of course, that hit of dopamine is always fleeting and the crash inevitably follows, leaving *Count Of Unease* to bring things to a low-key end, fading away on mournful, haunting melody.

Powerful and thought-provoking, if depressing, *The Future Bites* ultimately asks you to take a good hard look at what the hell you're doing with your life. Imagine no possessions – it's not that easy if you try, is it?

Emma Johnston

Inglorious

We Will Ride FRONTIERS MUSIC

British trad-rockers' difficult album number four is worth the trouble.

Cliché has it that following up your debut album is the tough ask. But London-based quintet Inglorious's fourth proved to be a considerably bigger challenge, after all but leonine frontman Nathan James and drummer Phil Beaver quit after recording 2019's *Ride To Nowhere*.

With three new members seemingly contributing more than their predecessors in terms of gnarly riffs and rhythmic gut-punch, the band have also overcome lockdown restrictions to record *We Will Ride* in a socially distanced Cardiff studio. The results are their best to date, with *She Won't Let Go* and *Medusa* (who apparently '*gives good lovin*'', snakes in hair notwithstanding) taking inspiration from femme fatales to breathe fresh life into an irresistible 70s rock template. Echoes of Purple, Whitesnake and Rainbow (both Dio and Bonnet eras) abound across melodically strident, melodramatically charged and riff-studded hard rock of a kind few bands currently dare to be passé enough to attempt.

Elsewhere an injection of Wagnerian power metal and James's opera-worthy singing fuel the howlingly good *He Will Provide, Cruel Intentions* and the windswept title track.

Consider the redemption arc complete.

Johnny Sharp

Death By Unga Bunga

Heavy Male Insecurity

JANSEN

Fifth album from muscular Norwegian power-poppers.

Given their name, place of origin (Norway) and penchant for shirtless beer-belly promo shots, one might assume DBYB are Turbonegro-esque phoney-but-real arena rockers. And they are, really, although unlike their denim-demon cohorts they rely less on heaving macho goon-show bullshit and more on frankly stellar songcraft.

Heavy Male Insecurity is the band's fifth full album in 10 years. And while you can safely file it away in the hard rock section of your media library, it flirts openly and suggestively with gooey late-70s power-pop and, less sexily, 90s pop-punk. The good stuff borders on the truly excellent: fully charged opener *Modern Man*, the Rick Springfield-y perfect FM radio pop of *Egocentric*, the Archies-meets-Hellacopters bubblegum rawk of *All Pain No Gain*, complete with a delightfully outta-nowhere NWOBHM guitar break. The really sugary tracks (*Like Your Style, Not Like The Others, My Buddy*) feel like the kinda all-day suckers latter-day Backyard Babies often spew up when they run out of ideas. Even those tracks make sense in the context of the whole album, though.

Lightweight but fun.

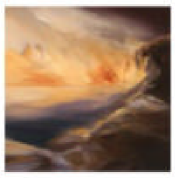
Sleazegrinder

The Besnard Lakes

The Besnard Lakes Are The Last Of The Great Thunderstorm Warnings

FULL TIME HOBBY

Canada's Flaming Lips return to their symphonic psych-rock comfort zone.



After five years of label changes and personal turmoil, the Montreal post-rock collective led by married composer-producer duo Jace Lasek and Olga Goreas return with a double-length exercise in mind-blowing symphonic maximalism.

In contrast to their relatively concise 2016 album *A Coliseum Museum Complex*, Canada's answer to the Flaming Lips fully indulge their baroque psych-prog experimentalism on richly layered studio confections that include oblique tributes to Prince and Talk Talk's Mark Hollis. Lacek also commemorates his father's death, on the opulent, gorgeous electro-orchestral epic *Christmas Can Wait*. From the dreamy sci-fi doo-wop of *Raindrops* to the blissed-out noodling of *The Dark Side Of Paradise*, this trippy sonic banquet is full of knowing homages to Brian Wilson and Pink Floyd. The anthemic psych-folk title track itself spans 17 minutes, most of which consists of luminous ambient afterglow.

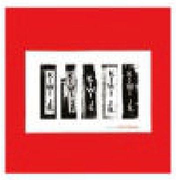
The Besnard Lakes might test the listener's patience at times, but their commendable commitment to monumental scale and ambition often results in something thrillingly beautiful.

Stephen Dalton

Kiwi Jr

Cooler Returns SUB POP

A blizzard of hooks and non sequiturs from Canada's catchiest new wave revisionists.



Newer wave, anyone? Toronto lo-fi alt.poppers Kiwi Jr have been reimagining melodic post-punk from 40 years removed since last year's brilliant debut *Football Money*. Taking Costello, the Modern Lovers and the Only Ones as their basic framework, they slot in Pavement's grunge-pop insouciance, R.E.M.'s psych-folk lustre, and angular hooks indebted as much to They Might Be Giants as to The Strokes, to make a more richly textured and culturally expansive update. Then, judging by this tearaway second album, they rampage through this new sonic landscape ruining nuptuals (*Nashville Wedding*), digging up Richard III (*Tyler*) and questioning everything from Jack The Ripper's murder count (*Dodger*) to whether Woodstock really happened (*Omaha*). We'll have to take singer Jeremy Gaudet's word that there are narratives of break-ups, affairs, American politics and errant detectives woven among the scatter-gun references to Sherwood Forest, *Tomb Raider*, insurance fraud and ass tattoos. Either way, the wild, surreal lyricism just adds energy and intrigue to arguably the most exuberant guitar pop album of 2020.

Mark Beaumont

Black Honey

Written & Directed FOXFIVE

Sassy Brighton pop-punks make a familiar but fun racket.

Brighton guitar quartet Black Honey have followed a familiar indie-rock career path since their 2014 debut, nabbing an *NME* cover, supporting Queens Of The Stone Age, and pressing all the right teen-friendly tame-rebel buttons to secure Reading Festival slots and BBC 6Music plays. But even if their brightly hued pop-punk sound feels formulaic and conservative, singer Izzy B Phillips exudes sassy frontwoman charisma, while her guitar-fondling boy-slaves make a generally exciting racket on this polished second album. Fuzzed-up stompers like *Run For Cover* and *Believer* are shallow, but the fun *Summer '92* already feels like a future arena-sized anthem, and *Disinfected* is impressively forensic retro-grunge pastiche complete with dynamic loud-quiet structure and humongous, moshpit-rocking chorus. Phillips also does romantic sweetness with conviction, from intoxicated melodic chugger *Back Of The Bar* to the woozy, stripped-down, gently menacing chanson *Gabrielle*. Their sugar-coated badass swagger might be toothless and adolescent, but sometimes teenage dreams are hard to beat.

Stephen Dalton

Jason Bieler & The Baron Von Bielski Orchestra

Songs For The Apocalypse FRONTIERS

An apocalypse to copy.

After a conventional start with hard rockers Saigon Kick (who scored a US hit with the ballad *Love Is On The Way* in 1991), Jason Bieler found mixing up styles more challenging, and his 1998 solo debut *Houston We Have A Problem* was a fine metal/drum'n'bass mash-up.

He's pursued this policy on various projects, to the point where it's often difficult to categorise his music. He's got the ear of other musicians, though, as the membership of the Baron Von Bielski Orchestra confirms; Todd La Torre (Queensrÿche), Dave Ellefson (Megadeth), Devin Townsend and Pat Badger (Extreme), Jeff Scott Soto and Bumblefoot (Son Of Apollo) are just some of those bringing their diverse talents to Bieler's cleverly wrought riffs and themes that are more melodic than they might first appear.

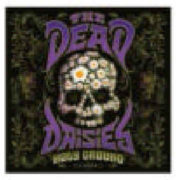
Regardless of this album's fortunes, expect to hear Bieler's ideas on other people's records over the next couple of years.

Hugh Fielder

The Dead Daisies

Holy Ground STEAMHAMMER/SPV

What the Voice Of Rock Glenn Hughes did next.



Although The Dead Daisies released *The Lockdown Sessions*, a digital acoustic EP, last July, this fifth studio album is the full debut of another new line-up. It's a real tectonic shift, given that Glenn Hughes replaces both singer John Corabi and bassist Marco Mendoza. Only band leader/second guitarist David Lowy remains from the line-up on their 2013 debut.

Happily, Doug Aldrich plays stun-gun lead guitar for the third album in succession, and drummer Deen Castronovo completes the quartet, playing on his second studio album with the band, even sharing lead vocals on what could be the definitive cover of Humble Pie's *30 Days In The Hole*.

Hughes's songwriting is much in evidence. Stylistically this record sounds more like his magnificent 2016 album *Resonate* than like any previous Daisies album. So over 11 tracks/48 minutes it's uniformly slick, powerful and hook-laden. There's just the question of whether to file it under 'D' or 'H'.

Neil Jeffries

Love And Death

Perfectly Preserved EARACHE

Nu-metal lovers rejoice.

Anyone pining for the parachute pants and nu-metal breakdowns of the early 00s will get a nostalgic rush listening to Korn guitarist Brian 'Head' Welch's side band Love And Death (what were you expecting, free jazz?). Sure, nu metal isn't a genre that's aged well, usually inciting seething hatred from anyone who wasn't the right age at the right time. But Welch might be trying to win over a new generation, given that *Perfectly Preserved*, Love And Death's second album, includes a cover of dance hit *Let Me Love You* that features Justin Bieber on vocals. The album displays the more earnest side of Korn's repertoire – there are plenty of chunky nu-metal breakdowns and grinding guitar riffs that transport us back to 2001, but they take a back seat to the soaring choruses.

If you can stomach the extra cheese, this is a polished lesson in melodic alt.metal, definitely destined for American arenas.

Hannah May Kilroy

ROUND-UP: MELODIC ROCK

By Dave Ling

Creye: a deft fusion of pop sensibilities and vintage AOR.

MIKAEL ROOS/PRESS

Creye

II FRONTIERS

Just over two years ago, Creye's self-titled debut ticked most of the boxes in this reviewer's checklist. Formed in 2015 by guitarist and songwriter Andreas Gullstrand, they set out to "combine modern radio pop vibes with the tasteful retro sound of the 1980s". By and large that goal was achieved, although the album suffered from issues of inconsistency.

Now Creye are back with a capable new singer, and a follow-up that reaps the rewards of having become a working, gigging band and not simply Gullstrand flanked by hired guns.

Once again the album's early tracks inspire optimism, notably the excellent *Siberia*, which offers shades of Toto. But this time the quality doesn't taper off and Creye don't resort to plodding through the record's latter stages.

Coloured to perfection by the keyboards of Joel Selsfors, Creye's deft fusion of pop sensibilities and vintage AOR suggests that soon this Swedish band will be spoken of in the same breath as fellow Scandinavians Work Of Art, One Desire and Art Nation.

Wig Wam

Never Say Die FRONTIERS

After disbanding in 2014, Wig Wam capitalised on an intended live reunion scuppered by covid-19 to force out another album. For those titillated by their previous three, *Never Say Die* is an unexpected treat. As befitting a group comprising Glam, Teeny, Flash and Sporty, a certain cartoonish vibe prevails, but Wig Wam are at least 95 per cent serious.

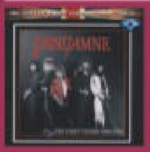
Kickin' Valentina

The Revenge Of Rock MIGHTY MUSIC

Named after a fetish porn star with a penchant for kicking men in their balls, you'd expect Kickin' Valentina to inject their music with bags of attitude. And that's precisely what the Atlanta-based quartet do on this feisty third album produced by Andy Reilly (UFO, Bruce Dickinson). *Rat Race* and *End Of The Road* do their namesake proud.

Vandamne

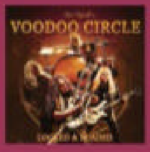
The First Crimes, 1988-1991 STEELHEART MEMORIES



Part of the ongoing Lost UK Jewels demo series, this 15-song set focuses on Cirencester's Vandamne, a promising Dokken-esque band that never really got the breaks. Summing up a very specific window in time, you can probably guess what Living *On The Edge Of Your Heart* sounds like – and that's intended as a compliment.

Voodoo Circle

Locked & Loaded AFM



With vocalist David Readman and drummer Markus Kullman back on board, the Voodoo Circle line-up responsible for their best-loved album, 2011's *Broken Heart Syndrome*, return. *Locked & Loaded* lives up to the sense of expectation fuelled by such a reunion, channelling a bluesy swagger that doffs its cap to the arena-conquering days of Whitesnake.

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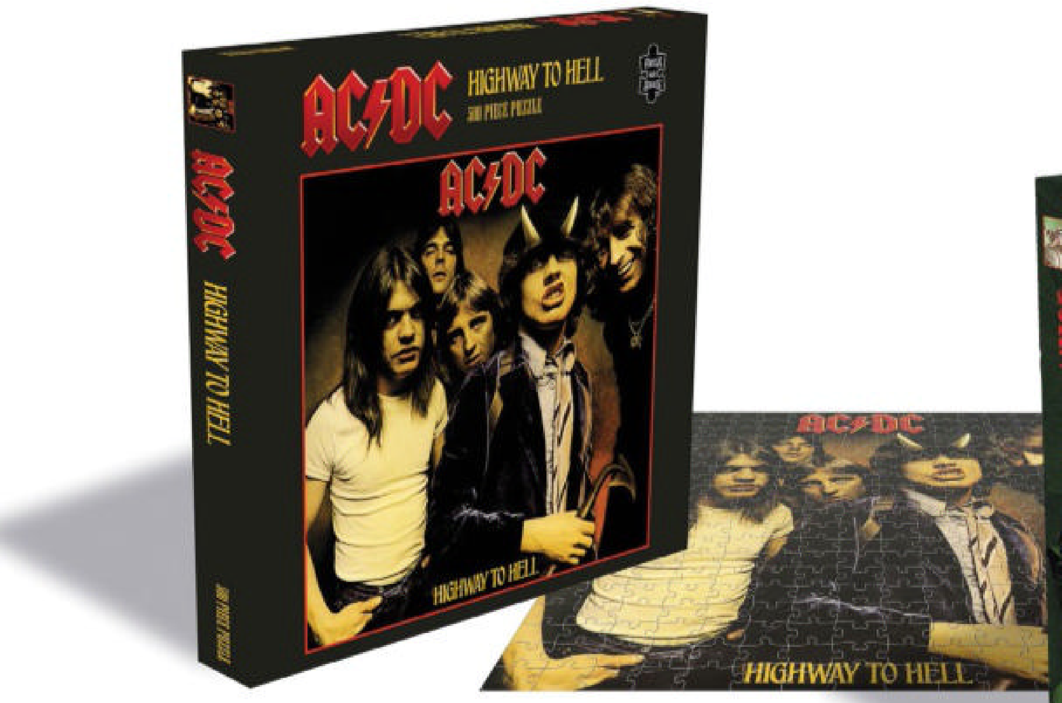
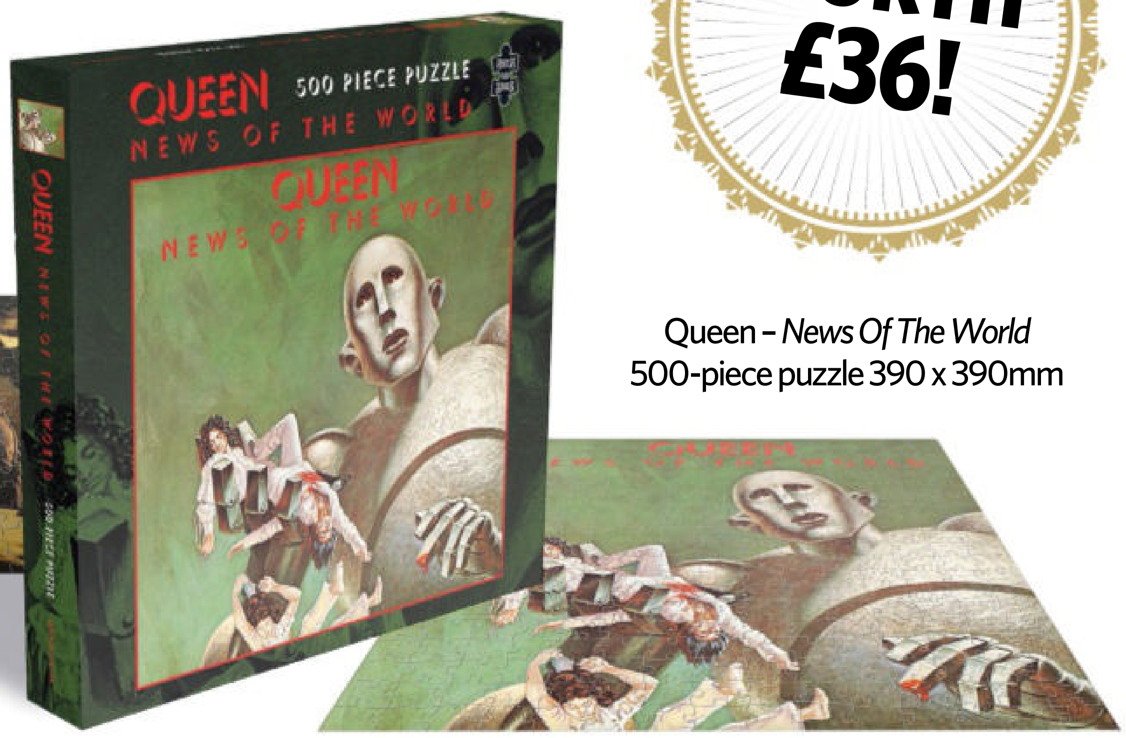


AC/DC – *Highway To Hell*
500-piece puzzle 410 x 410mm



Queen – *News Of The World*
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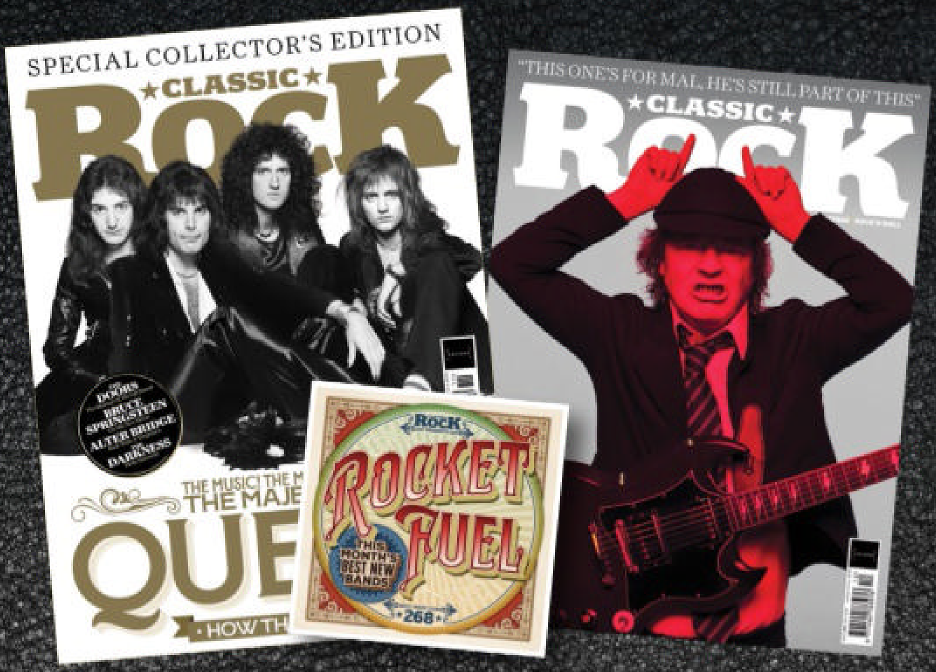

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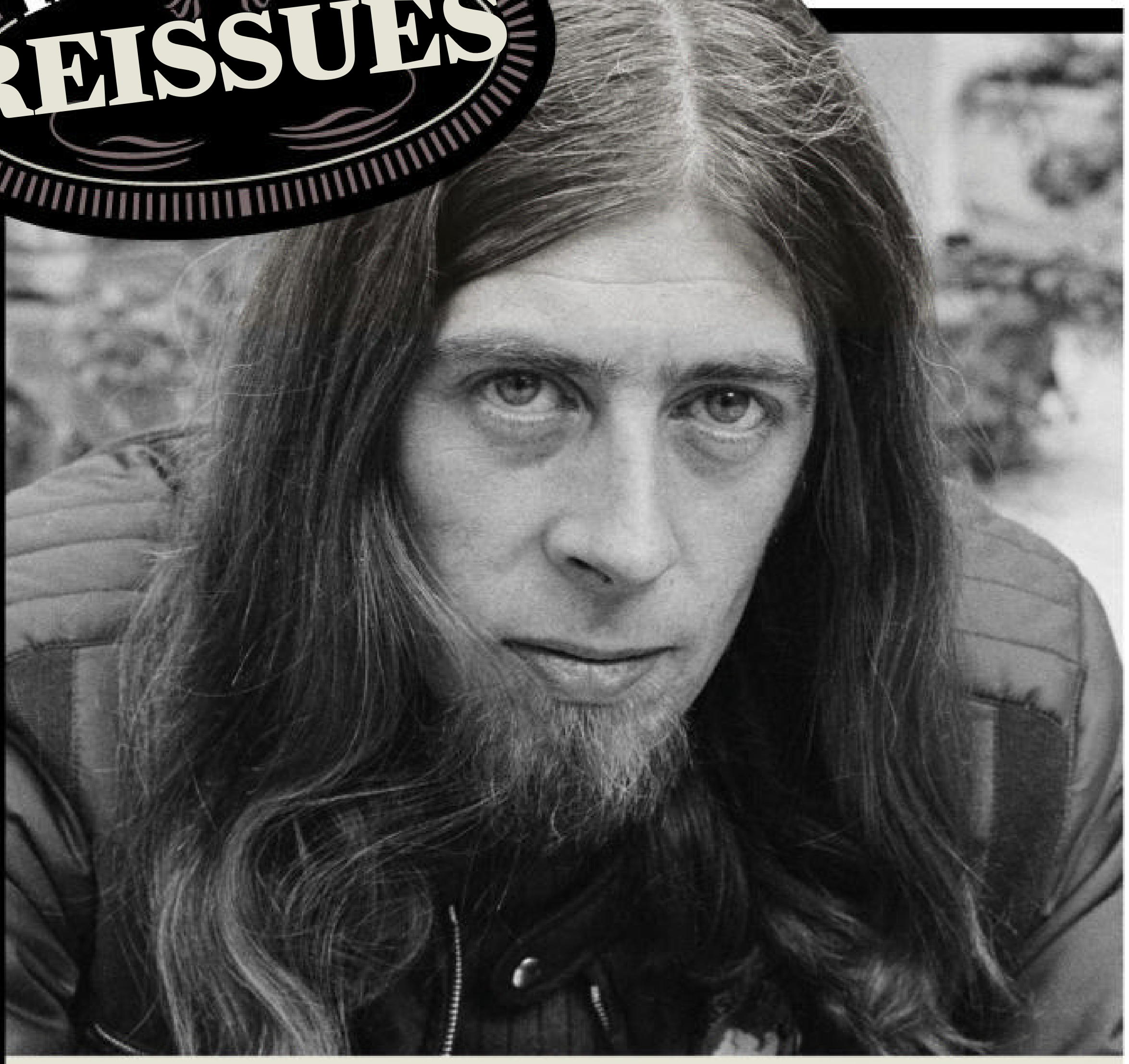
THE HARD STUFF
REISSUES



John Mayall
The First Generation 1965-1974
MADFISH/SNAPPER MUSIC

Godfather Of British Blues' golden years.

The commercial viability of bumper box sets can be puzzling. Anyone contemplating shelling out a tidy sum for one is almost certainly going to be a big fan of the artist and therefore already have much, even all, of the music; anyone who isn't already a fan is highly unlikely to throw often hundreds of pounds at a musical blind date.

In which case the big question from the former about this 35-disc collection from the Godfather Of British Blues is: "What's in it?" Because they'll already know how hugely influential Mayall's benchmark *Bluesbreakers With Eric Clapton* was on a whole generation, with 'God' on fire. Or how his next (another 'every home should have one') album *A Hard Road* gave Beano a run for its money, with 'unknown' guitarist Peter Green flooring listeners – and every budding blues guitarist – with his exquisite touch and melodic flair. They'll nod and say: "Yeah, I know," when you mention killer golden-era Mayall albums such as *Crusade* (with yet another head-turning guitarist, Mick Taylor), *The Turning Point*, *Bare Wires* and *Blues From Laurel Canyon*; or the excellent but strangely unsung brassy double *Ten Years Gone* that sounds 30 years younger than its 1974 vintage, or the intriguing and also unsung *Jazz Blues Fusion* (live), with percussionist Ron Selico in the driving seat and injecting some bits of funk when the purists aren't looking, superbly recorded for the period… Even non-fans must marvel at the list of top-drawer musicians that have passed through Mayall's bands/blues finishing school over the decades, in which he was often the catalyst rather than the star.

As for the aforementioned big question, the answer is: all of the albums just mentioned, plus the rest of the treasure trove Mayall recorded between '65 and '74 (all remastered). These include compilations, a bucketful of previously unreleased material including seven gigs from '67-70 (among them Windsor Jazz & Blues Festival '67 and a feisty Berlin '69) dotted with some particularly thrilling performances, as are 28 BBC tracks from that Clapton/Green/Taylor purple patch, plus with-extras, mono and stereo versions and remixes. Mayall continued after '74, of course, but most fans would agree that of his huge catalogue the stuff here is the gold.

While listening to that gem-studded armful of British blues you can read the box set's two books, and decide which wall to put the two posters on.

It's a limited edition, so if it flicks your switch move fast and pre-order (£275) at https://bit.ly/3894NKp

Rating: 7/10

Paul Henderson

Jet
Get Born CHERRY RED

Bells-and-whistles reissue of Oz rockers' debut.

The Strokes might have been more photogenic and The White Stripes blessed with a better back story, but Melbourne quartet Jet lit up the early noughties with a less strategic appeal: an unshakeable faith in classic rock.

As a consequence, 18 years on from release their debut album *Get Born* (the title taken from Dylan's *Subterranean Homesick Blues*) has aged like vintage malt whisky. With Dave Sardy's no-frills production adding to the timeless feel, breakout hit *Are You Gonna Be My Girl?* now sounds like a jukebox staple, while *Get What You Need*, *Get Me Outta Here* and *Cold Hard Bitch* expertly straddle the divide between AC/DC and the Stones, the sonic fizz cranked up to 11 thanks to Nic Cester's gravel-gargling rasp and brother Chris's Keith Moon-like drums.

The back-to-basics feel is summed up by spirited dance music diss *Rollover DJ* – complete with keyboards by Billy Preston – but Jet could do tender too, as proven by touching ballad *Move On*.

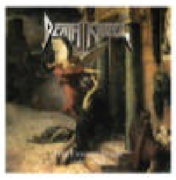
Such visceral energy would later desert the band, but with 22 bonus tracks including demos, radio sessions and a DVD of the videos and rare live performances this is Jet at their turbo-charged best.

Rating: 9/10

Paul Moody

Death Angel
The Enigma Years: 1987-1990 HEAR NO EVIL

Bay Area thrash pups' early career collected.



Death Angel were the Bash Street Kids of the 80s thrash scene; five teenage brothers and cousins who made Metallica and Slayer look like creaky old men. That callowness shows on the San Francisco band's 1987 debut album *The Ultraviolence*, one of the four discs in this box set covering their years on influential US label Enigma. Youthful enthusiasm rather than nailed-on songcraft fires *Thrashers* and *Evil Priest*, although the 10-minute instrumental title track is a mark of their ambition.

Follow-up *Frolic Through The Park*, released two years later, delivered on that ambition. Tighter and more melodic, this was the work of a band who had matured exponentially, even if *Open Up* sparked off thrash's mercifully brief dalliance with funk metal. The box set is completed by 1990 live album *Fall From Grace* and the self-explanatory Rarities disc, both of which super-serve hard-core Death Angel fans but will be of little interest to anyone else.

It's not the full story; 1990's career high point *Act III* is omitted due to the fact that the band had bailed on Enigma for Geffen by that point. But even without it, this collection is a small but important piece of the thrash jigsaw.

Rating: 6/10

Dave Everley

Tommy James And The Shondells
Celebration: The Complete Roulette Recordings 1966-1973 CHERRY RED

Cracking compendium of underrated band's leap from pop to psychedelia.

From bubblegum hits to psychedelic classics in a nanosecond, from being stiffed by gangsters to collapsing on stage and being briefly declared dead (50 years ago), Tommy James is the very stuff of rock'n'roll legend, and it's a mystery why there aren't 11 biopics about him. It's also baffling that *Crimson And Clover* and *Cellophane Symphony*, his two 1969 insane, trippy whirls of experimental genius, aren't routinely cited as being up there with *Sgt. Pepper* and *Pet Sounds*. They're not just "Huh, didn't realise he went *that* far out", they're startling, beautiful and inspired. The fact that then US vice president Hubert Humphrey wrote the sleeve notes for *Crimson And Clover* is the least weird thing about it.

Everything the Shondells did, plus some early post-band James stuff, is gathered on this 141-track, six-CD set. From the first fizz-bombs like *Hanky Panky* and *Mony Mony*, brilliant in their own right, to – seemingly overnight – the echo-heavy proto-shoegaze of *Crystal Blue Persuasion* or *I Am A Tangerine*, and the gorgeous, surviving popcraft of *Smokey Roads* or *Sweet Cherry Wine*, they were raw and alive. One wishes they'd had a producer noticing it was all too toppy, but then perhaps it

© MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY/PRESS

wouldn't sound so like a whacked-out dream.

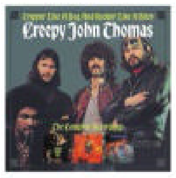
Chris Roberts

Creepy John Thomas

Trippin' Like A Dog And Rockin' Like A Bitch

GRAPEFRUIT

Tripped out.



After the fnar-fnar jokes, the question remains: who is or was Creepy John Thomas? In 1968 he was an Australian who'd been in a couple of rock'n'roll bands, living in Germany as a DJ in a psychedelic club, selling drugs to Jefferson Airplane (probably not a hard sell). He landed a deal with EMI Germany and recorded an album, *Come With Me*, as Rust, with an English rhythm section who supplied most of the songs that echoed the British scene from a couple of years earlier. The vocals sound weirdly wobbly, and the psychedelic effects appear to have been added by an elephant on angel dust.

The album flopped, and Rust slept. But Thomas had listened to a Canned Heat album and met a young, enthusiastic (and somewhat naïve) Conny Plank, who cleaned up the psychedelic effects on the Creepy John Thomas album, released in late 1969, but buried the vocals.

Another flop, another record deal over. But that didn't stop Thomas and Plank recording a follow-up album of druggy blues, *Brother Bat Bone*, released in 1971. It was meant to be called *Brother Back Bone*, but something got lost in translation. Like the music.

Hugh Fielder

J Mascis

Fed Up And Feeling Strange (Live And In Person 1993 – 1998)

CHERRY RED

Dinosaur Jr shredder goes acoustic in live album box set.

Phil Smith, Thee Hypnotics' drummer, has a fascinating recollection of that band's first US tour: "The first time we played New York was the Pyramid Club on Avenue A," he recalls. "We got there for sound-check, and J Mascis was there and he said: 'How are you doing, guys? I'm going to do the door tonight.' And he did the door. J Mascis from Dinosaur Jr did the fucking door. I love that!"

J Mascis is indeed a man of many facets, chief among them being his undisputed skill at heroic guitar soloing played at ear-splitting volume though stacks that would have made Hendrix blush. And, as with his ability to stamp punters' hands, with *Fed Up And Feeling Strange* we find another aspect of his relationship with the guitar, when he unplugs and reaches for his trusted 1970 Martin acoustic.

Housed in this package are the previously released live solo acoustic albums *Martin + Me* and *J Mascis Live At CBGBs: The First Acoustic Show*, here augmented by the hitherto unreleased *Live In Copenhagen*. The collection makes for an intriguing chronological listen, not least as they reveal Mascis growing from an almost embarrassed hesitancy to a confident solo performer. The nervousness of his 1993 solo debut is half of that album's charm, as are the covers, which include Lynyrd Skynyd's *Every Mother's Son*.

The 1998 Copenhagen recording takes gold with strident versions of *Little Fury Things* and *Drawerings* that display Mascis's proficiency without the need for extreme volume.

Julian Marszalek

The Black Keys

Brothers NONESUCH

Tenth-anniversary celebration of Akron duo's career breakthrough, now including three bonus tracks.

Trailed by a witty short video lampooning the dire state of the world in 2020 (check it out on YouTube), this lavish multi-format edition of The Black Keys' career peak is a reminder of how vital their contribution to rock has been over the past 20 years.

Recorded mostly at the legendary Muscle Shoals Sound Studio in Alabama, their sixth album found Dan Auerbach and Patrick Carney dredging both musical and personal swamps for inspiration, delivering their gritty minimalist blues through a sludgy filter of obscure psychedelic R&B and reverb-drenched noir. It hardly screamed "commercial hit", then. Yet by reflecting the Keys' own turbulent private lives – *Next Girl* was a reference to Carney's bitter divorce – it unlocked a chart potential that had been evident to fans of the band since their 2002 debut *The Big Come Up*.

A decade and a million sales on, some of *Brothers*' power has been dimmed by familiarity – breakout hit *Tighten Up* has been used in a slew of TV and film tie-ins. However, the ever-present amp crackle and beehive distortion ensure that it retains a visceral, lo-fi feel, adding to troubled songs such as *Too Afraid To Love You*.

Pulverising glam stomp *Chop And Change* is the best of the three excellent bonus tracks (the others being a caustic *Keep My Name Outta Your Mouth* and the funky instrumental *Black Mud Part II*), but it's Auerbach's extraordinarily expressive voice that makes *Brothers* such a special record, veering between a sleazy rock croon (*Howlin' For You*), a Prince-like falsetto (*The Only One*) and a soulful rasp (*Ten Cent Pistol*) at will. The result is a modern masterpiece.

Paul Moody

Curved Air

The Albums 1970-73 ESOTERIC

Madly eclectic prog pioneers' studio output boxed up.

GETTY

It's not easy being several bands at once. But Curved Air seemed to be attempting it on their 1970 debut album *Air Conditioning* (**8/10**), reissued here along with the three other studio sets that followed it.

Such eclecticism would put them firmly in the prog firmament, but their debut suggests that sticking to any one sonic identity held no interest for them. The gnarly post-psychedelia of *It Happened Today* also hints at singer-songwriterish fare in its easy-going piano backing, even as Francis Monkman's hyperactive guitar licks suggest he's desperate to show us his skills. In the same song, violinist Darryl Way makes his mark before his fiddle decorates the folk-rock boogie of *Stretch*. Elsewhere he gets full rein on the seven-minute classical-rock fantasy *Vivaldi*, which ends up crashing and burning amid an avant-noise cacophony. The symphonic flower-pop of *Screw* is a thing of beguiling beauty as Sonja Kristina's charismatic vocals continue to captivate.

By 1971's *Second Album* (**8/10**) she'd helped them raise their profile considerably on a similarly diverse collection, kicked into gear with the sweetly keyboard-garlanded trip of *Young Mother* and the faintly foreboding hit single *Back Street Luv*. But then we lurch from the contrast of the Lloyd Webber-esque torch song *Jumbo* to the 12-minute *Piece Of Mind*, which bows out with jazzy time signatures battling against symphonic swells, freewheeling synth spirals and a quacking duck.

Phantasmagoria (1972, **8/10**) put Kristina front and centre even more noticeably at first, with *Marie Antionette* and *Melinda (More Or Less)* reeling us in with fey myths and legends, but Way and Monkman still had their heads. Not everyone will be seduced by the dizzy, eight-minute jazz-rock maelstrom of *Over And Above*, but either side of it are tighter tracks.

As the extensive sleeve-notes by *Classic Rock*'s Malcolm Dome explain, by 1973's final album *Air Cut* (**7/10**) Monkman and Way had departed, and the band focused their sound on broader rock strokes, such as the feisty *Purple Speed Queen*, the Zep-ish riffage of *U.H.F.* and the folky paean *Elfin Boy*. *Metamorphosis*, full of baroque piano passages, keeps up the experimental side, but overall, even with former Roxy Music man Eddie Jobson in the line-up, they don't display the same magnetic mood swings that made the original line-up so compelling.

Johnny Sharp

Buzzcocks

United Artists Singles Box Set DOMINO

Back where they belong: on vinyl, in a dozen original sleeves.

When we lost Pete Shelley in 2018 we lost one of the greatest pop craftsmen humankind ever produced. His uncanny ability to deliver concise, engaging exemplars of edgy, post-punk minimalism with durable mainstream appeal never left him – Buzzcocks' final album, *The Way* (2014), maintained the reunited combo's perpetually upward creative trajectory – but it was the seven-inch singles the band released for United Artists between 1977 and 1980 that represent him best. When programmed back-to-back on essential vinyl-age compilation *Singles Going Steady* (and its expanded 2001 CD edition) they represented an unassailable legacy, the punk era's equivalent of *The Beatles 1962-1966* Red album. Minimalist, thrash-paced, laced with cynicism and humour and delivered with occasional gobbets of sneer-lipped spite, but irresistibly perfect pop all the same.

Lyrically, Pete Shelley specialised in trauma for teens. After opening the Buzzcocks' UA account with Howard Devoto co-written masturbation anthem/tantrum *Orgasm Addict*, he served up a quintet of '78 A-sides that refracted the accepted model of romantic trad-pop fiction through a contemporary punk prism. Eternally frustrated, fashionably world-weary protagonist Pete is invariably devoted to someone he shouldn't've fallen in love with.

His bottomless well of affection being unrequited (*What Do I Get?*), he tries sympathy: '*This pathetic clown will keep hanging around, that's if you don't mind*' (*I Don't Mind*) before simply giving up and moving on: '*I'm in love again, this time's true I'm sure*' (*Love You More*). But, Pete being Pete, the course of true love never did run smooth: '*You spurn my natural emotions, you make me feel I'm dirt, and I'm hurt*' (the timelessly brilliant *Ever Fallen In Love (With Someone You Shouldn't've?)*). By the end of Shelley's tumultuous year of emotional disappointment, things finally seem to be looking up. Ten seconds into *Promises*: '*Loving you is easy you are on my side*'; yet less than 90 seconds later: '*Oh, why did you ever let me down?*' Pete never had it easy.

And oh how we identified. Living one's life in a leather jacket with one's hair spiked did not make one immune to the emotional agony of ongoing adolescence.

Buzzcocks' brilliance wasn't limited to Shelley's keening vulnerability. There was the jaw-dropping economy of their guitar solos, Steve Diggle's sympathetic bray-along backing vocals, and Assorted Images' extraordinary sleeve art.

A priceless legacy.

Ian Fortnam

Fraternity

Seasons Of Change: The Complete Recordings 1970-1974 LEMON

Not your usual Bon…

Fraternity are best known as the band Bon Scott fronted before joining AC/DC. And like many Aussie rock bands of the late 60s and early 70s, tend to get overlooked in favour of artists that followed in their wake. Yet theirs is a fascinating story.

This impressive box set collects the band's two studio albums, 1971's raw and slightly roughshod *Livestock* and the wonderfully titled 1972 follow-up *Flaming Galah* with a third disc, *Second Chance*, of previously unheard demos and live material, along with an informative 48-page book.

Inquisitive AC/DC fans should be warned! Fraternity's music bears little resemblance to the driving hard rock Bon would become famous for in DC. It's a curious hybrid of UK prog and US rock, so while the likes of *Somerville* and *Welfare Boogie* come on like Little Feat or The Band, *Raglan's Folly* (featuring Bon on recorder!), *Grand Canyon Suites* or their faithful cover of the Moody Blues' *Question* display the band's progressive intentions.

In truth, Lowell George nor Keith Emerson had anything to fear, but Fraternity wore their hearts on their sleeves honestly and Scott's singing across the board is something of a revelation.

Jerry Ewing

Disco Zombies

South London Stinks OPTIC NERVE

Here-today, gone-tomorrow punks left behind one album and some bits.

The Wikipedia entry is brief: Disco Zombies were a UK punk band of the late 1970s. One of the better-known songs was *Drums Over London* (1979). That's one way of recounting it.

Another is to reference the band's humble beginnings in a Leicester students' hall of residence in 1977, plying power-pop punk in the style of The Records, Nipple Erectors or The Freshies, poking fun at discos and *Top Of The Pops*; a cardboard-box version of The Jam, early single *Drums Over London* ravishing with its three-word call-and-response refrain. This version ends up by pointing out the band's links to Blur (second guitarist Andy Ross discovered them) and *Mojo* magazine (singer Dave Henderson). Lashings of fun, enthusiasm, youthful swaggering and alcohol. The sort of band who record four songs in an hour and think they've wasted time.

Bands like this were a dime a dozen at the turn of the 70s. You'll read that like it's a bad thing, but it isn't. Most of 'em had at least a brace of decent songs – to *Drums* you can add *Here Come The Bats*, pre-*When Saturday Comes* Tony Hateley and partway acerbic *Target Practice* (about shooting your ex- with an air rifle). And others.

This 20-track, two-LP compilation comes on coloured vinyl and with sleeve-notes (doubtless copious).

Everett True

Byzantium

Halfway Dreaming: Anthology 1969-75 CHERRY RED

All the Byzantium you need, in one box.

Another one of those unfortunate bands that never got a fair crack first time around due largely to music industry indifference, psychedelic proggers Byzantium ended up as a stepping stone by which various members went on to other, more successful things, most notably future Ian Dury collaborator Chaz Jankel.

Originally signed to A&M Records, the band released two studio albums – 1972's self-titled debut and 1973's *Seasons Changing* – and 1974's *Live/Studio*, a privately pressed showcase album intended to garner label interest once A&M had pulled the plug on them. Vinyl copies of their back catalogue are much sought after.

This impressive five-CD anthology pulls together all that material, along with the 1969 album by cult folky predecessor band Ora, plus a load of demos and live recordings, to create a highly enjoyable Byzantium one-stop shop for all your trippy hippie rock requirements. In particular, the previously unreleased 1975 four-track EP expanding the *Live/Studio* disc is great, and disc five

features scintillating live material from 1974-75, previously available only as a download album.

Dreamy, lush and oh-so laid back, Byzantium's tight vocal harmonies and guitar wizardry are as wonderfully compelling now as they ever were.

Essi Berelian

Magnum
Dance Of The Black Tattoo
STEAMHAMMER/SPV

Brit pomp-rock warhorses raid the vaults for rarities album.

Given the parlous future that many bands currently face, Magnum can be forgiven for cobbling together a compilation album from their live tracks and rarities. This sequel to 2017's self-explanatory *Valley Of Tears – The Ballads* flips the picture, focusing on the Birmingham veterans' rockier side.

It's a grab-bag, for sure, with a motley assortment of live tracks sitting next to assorted radio edits and deep cuts, mostly taken from the lesser-loved second half of their career. But even that doesn't mask Magnum's class; *Phantom Of The Paradise Circus* and *Your Dreams Won't Die* are timeless and grandiose, making a case for guitarist Tony Clarkin as one the most underrated songwriters Britain has ever produced. It won't do anything to accelerate their long-overdue ascension to National Treasure status, but it's a nice reminder of what a brilliant band Magnum truly are.

Dave Everley

Seduce
Too Much Ain't Enough
PRUDENTIAL/ROUGE

Sleazy does it.

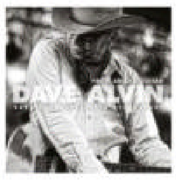
Perhaps best known for their appearance in Penelope Spheeris's documentary *The Decline Of Western Civilization Part II: The Metal Years*, Detroit's Seduce ticked all the boxes – the hair, the riffs, the almost comical levels of self-belief – and were the only band in the film not based in Los Angeles.

Grittier and heavier than many of their contemporaries, their Detroit brand of glam was a lot darker, punkier and nastier than the likes of your Faster Pussycats and Londons, and second album *Too Much Ain't Enough*, which features *Crash Landing* from *The Metal Years*, is a fine example of style and substance. Absolutely drenched in reverb – at times it sounds like it was all recorded in a cavernous aircraft hangar – *Accusations, Watchin', No Use* and cracking bonus track *Homicide* are an almost perfect encapsulation of underground 80s metal. It ain't pretty, that's for sure, but the album exudes a trashy glamour all its own.

Essi Berelian

Dave Alvin
From An Old Guitar: Rare And Unreleased Recordings
YEP ROC

Master blaster.



Whereas many musicians fret over their recording careers, Dave Alvin just books a studio whenever he has some spare cash, rounds up a bunch of his guitar-picking, singer-songwriter, alt.country, honky-tonk mates and lays down a couple of songs. Whatever takes his fancy, really. The main thing is to have fun doing it. And then every so often he gathers up the tracks and sticks them out on a record.

If the prissy perfectionism of Ry Cooder and his ilk sometimes leaves you unsated, then you should try *From An Old Guitar* as an antidote. If the first two tracks – a cool, gruff but melodic cover of Chris Smithers's *Link Of Chain*, and an apocalyptic cover of *Highway 61* with a menacing spoken vocal, and guitars that challenge Dylan's original zany backing to the max – don't have you pawing the ground for the other 14 tracks, then you should probably veg out in front of a TV reality show.

Hugh Fielder

Fumble
Not Fade Away: The Complete Recordings 1964-1982
GRAPEFRUIT

The art of rock'n'roll.

Possessing the sleeve of rock'n'roll revival band Fumble's 1972 debut album would probably put you on the Sex Offenders Register these days. You could try pointing out the not-so-subtle connection between the Hipgnosis-designed sleeve and the band's name, but that kind of humour is incompatible with the #metoo era. And if the authorities ever discover the reason why Renaissance singer Annie Haslam's shrieks and giggles disrupt the pathos of *Ebony Eyes*, that out-take would be banned.

Fumble started reviving rock'n'roll before it had even expired, albeit under different names. And they did so with a gusto and a twinkle that caught the attention of David Bowie, who hired them as the support band on his 1973 *Ziggy Stardust* UK and US tours.

That was their peak, although there's always a market for rock'n'roll as fun and light entertainment. And to be fair, Fumble sometimes aimed higher; their cover of *Not Fade Away* adds something to the Buddy Holly original. But generally, what might have you tapping your feet at a cabaret night out loses its allure in your sitting room. Listen to their version of *The Letter* and ask yourself: "Why?"

Hugh Fielder

Jon Anderson
Song Of Seven
ESOTERIC/CHERRY RED

Second solo album from the most famous voice of Yes.

GETTY

His name is rarely mentioned alongside those of Robert Plant, Paul Rodgers, Steve Marriott and other rock greats, but it's difficult to think of a 1970s English rock singer with a more distinctive voice than Jon Anderson. In a high register he possesses clarity and tone that makes his a supreme instrument.

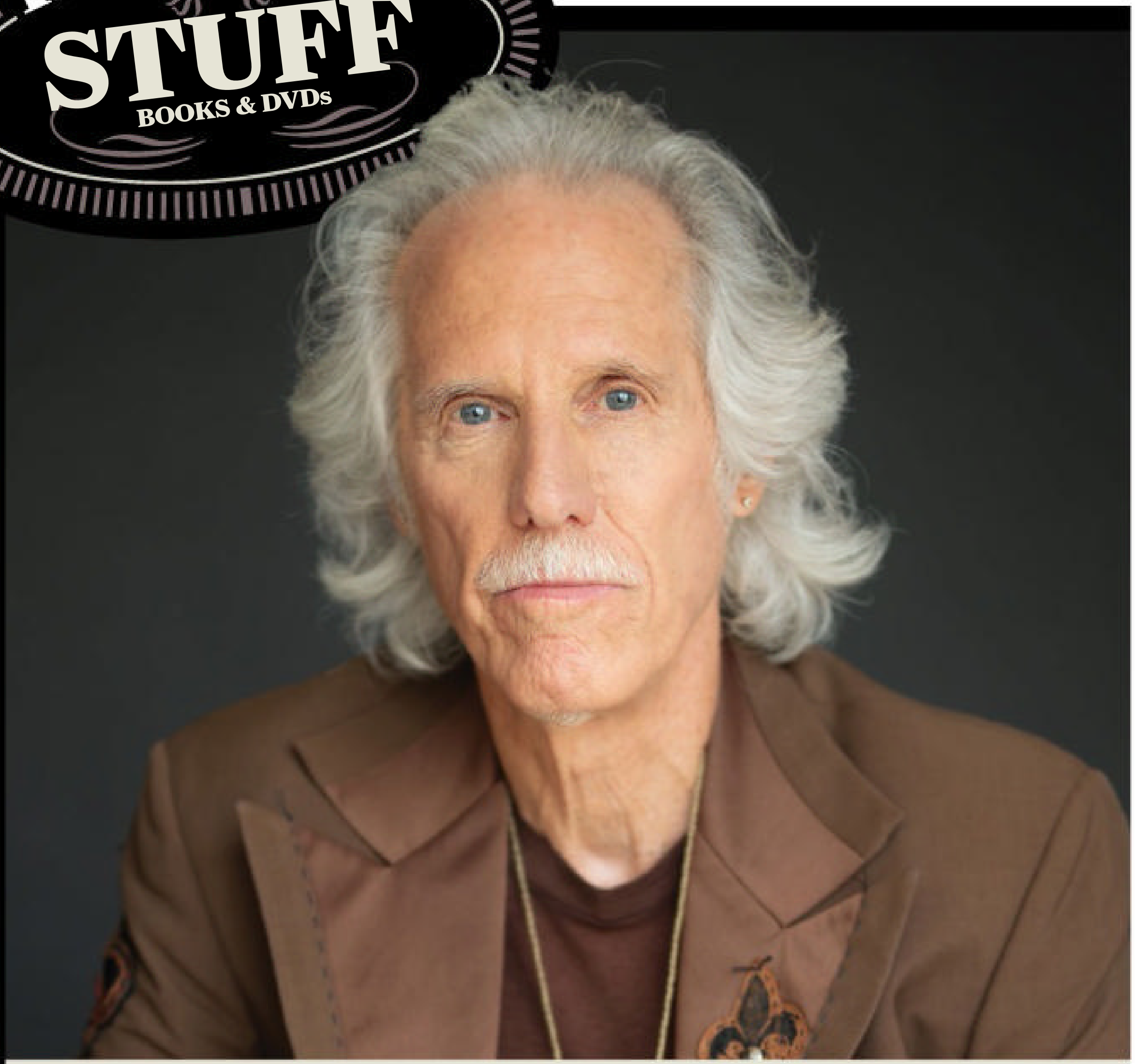
Despite a predilection for whimsical and sometimes baffling lyrics, he also knows a good tune when one comes to him. For all Yes's pomp, Anderson's songwriting gave their late-70s albums hit singles – *Wonderous Stories* and *Going For The One*, plus *Don't Kill The Whale* (co-credited to Chris Squire). Then in November 1980 this second solo album emerged, following another hit from his first pairing with Vangelis, *I Hear You Now* from *Short Stories*.

That second, *Song Of Seven*, follows that plan, and is a world away from his first, 1976's *Olias Of Sunhillow*, a concept piece on which Anderson played all instruments. This one – made after he (and Rick Wakeman) quit Yes as the band struggled to record a follow-up to *Tormato* – boasts an impressive cast. The core are guitarist Ian Bairnson (Alan Parsons Project/Kate Bush), keyboard player Ronnie Leahy (also on Steve Howe's second solo record), drummer Morris Pert (then fresh out of Brand X), and John Giblin (Peter Gabriel et al) delivering beautiful fretless bass lines, while Chris Rainbow adds contrasting backing vocals. In addition, jazz legends Dick Morrissey and Johnny Dankworth are on saxophones, and Jack Bruce appears on bass alongside drummer Simon Phillips and ex-Colosseum/Humble Pie guitarist Clem Clemson.

Unsurprisingly, the arrangements are slick and the sounds rich, as songs bounce along in a mix of soul, folk and pop melodies, although *Don't Forget (Nostalgia)* is a slow bossa nova and *Heart Of The Matter* echoes Doobies-style funk. (The latter is also one of the two bonus tracks included.)

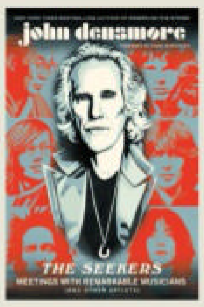
There are also songs that might have worked for Yes; *Hear It*, a short, acoustic-driven track, and *Everybody Loves You* are among four rejected for *Tormato*. The best, though, are *Take Your Time* (the UK single) and the 11-minute title track. The former is bright and summery triumph, the latter a mirror to Anderson's joyful worldview. A few keyboard sounds aside, the album has aged surprisingly well.

Neil Jeffries



JEFF KATZ PHOTOGRAPHY/PRESS

The Seekers: Meetings With Remarkable Musicians



John Densmore HACHETTE

Doors drummer opens a few.

John Paul Densmore is best-known as the drummer with The Doors, who appeared on every one of the band's recordings, including several made after frontman Jim Morrison's death. He is iconic in his own regard. He's the author of *New York Times* bestseller *Riders On The Storm*, and is viewed as a seeker and a survivor: a latter-day shaman, closely guarding the flame of mysticism and spirituality that believers feel surround The Doors ("of perception").

In this latest book he goes seeking for the bridge between art and existence, creativity and the soul. In doing so he writes each of its 24 chapters around a spiritual inspiration and/or mentor, including Patti Smith, Ravi Shankar, Robert Bly and Janis Joplin. Doubly impressive is that Densmore has met nearly all of them, even if sometimes only via a glorified spiritual meet-and-greet, such as with the Dalai Lama (the full title adds *And Other Artists*), so he is able to draw upon a deep well of first-hand anecdotes, with great attention to life's minutiae.

When these work, the book bursts into life: "'Can my boys borrow your drums?' 'Sure, Jerry Lee,' I smiled. He turned to Robby. 'Can we borrow a gittar?' 'What kind of guitar do you want? I have several,' Robby replied. 'Any old rock-'a-day Fender gittar,' Jerry Lee quipped. Apparently Mr. Lewis's band showed up at the gig without any instruments." (Chapter 15: Jerry Lee Lewis: Killer Energy).

Even if he doesn't know them, he knows someone who does: "Our lead singer certainly got Nico… literally. A few years later I was rooming next door to Jim at the Great Northern Hotel in Manhattan, and he and Nico kept me up all night with their antics. There was a lot of crashing around, which worried me, but they looked okay in the morning.' (Chapter 7: Lou Reed: Darkness Visible).

It's a great literary device, this ordering of chapters by inspiration, and Densmore has an obvious belief and love for his subjects that shines through. The problem is that although Densmore is clearly a well-read, erudite fellow with impressive musical chops – in one paragraph alone he references Greek-Armenian mystic GI Gurdjieff, Sting, Kate Bush, Mary Poppins, Alejandro Jodorowsky and Peter Gabriel – much of his recollections tend towards wise-after-the-event summarisations, a second-hand memoir played out through the lives of other, more famous people, however much he dresses it up as a quest for truth.

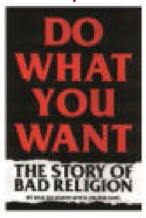
A good read, but an opportunity missed.

Everett True

Do What You Want: The Story Of Bad Religion

Bad Religion With Jim Ruland HACHETTE

White punks, sometimes on dope.



Bad Religion have been at it for 40 years now; the intellectual punks who sometimes succumbed to the less-than-intellectual pursuits of drugs (business brains Brett Gurewitz kept his crack cocaine in one pocket of his bathrobe, his heroin in another), drink and such internal bickering that Gurewitz and bassist Jay Bentley went to couples counselling.

Do What You Want tells a familiar saga, but, admirably for an official book, it makes no effort to portray band members past and present as anything other than selfish, brattish and, sometimes (as when Gurewitz quit over a guest-list place for Bentley's wife), intellectually challenged rather than intellectually challenging.

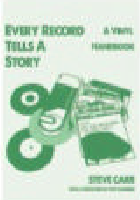
Other than characters such as their driver Dank, whose religion forbade him from showering, perhaps the most surprising aspect of their push for mainstream acceptance – which never quite happened outside Germany – is how little joy being in Bad Religion has brought its members. And that's the making of this surprisingly sad tale.

John Aizlewood

Every Record Tells A Story: A Vinyl Handbook

Steve Carr 140 PUBLISHING

Digital features transferred to the printed page.



Like the vinyl format beloved of record collector Steve Carr, his first book is very much characterised by A-sides and B-sides. Indeed, with its material taken from his blog of the same name, this is pretty much the literary equivalent of a greatest hits collection.

Carr is in his element recounting tales of acquiring the back catalogue of a selected artist within a tight time frame and an even tighter budget. These stories are told with warmth and good humour, and with necessary tips on what to look out for and how to buy them. Alas he's on shakier ground with the flip-sides in the form of artist biographies, which are too slight to fully engage. Most successful are the double A-sides in which Carr combines the two, such as his efforts to track down and reassess the Rolling Stones' first six albums, that delve between the buttons.

Julian Marszalek

Leonard Cohen: Untold Stories: The Early Years

Michael Posner SIMON & SCHUSTER

Potrait of the Canadian poet-sage as a young man.

Author, poet, lothario Leonard Cohen had lived a life before he released his first album, in 1967 at the age of 32. In this excellent oral history – the first of a proposed trilogy – Canadian author Michael Posner drills down deep into the first three decades of Cohen's life, charting his unlikely journey from scion of Montreal's upper-middle-class "Jewish aristocracy" to self-proclaimed Grocer Of Despair and poster boy for bedsit-dwelling depressives everywhere.

Posner has pulled together an almighty chorus of voices to give life to his portrait of a charismatic figure whose superhuman magnetism enabled him to sail through life effortlessly, although not undramatically. Relatives, friends and lovers (of whom there were many) pitch in to flesh out his formative years, while there are cameos from the likes of Allen Ginsberg, Bob Dylan, Andy Warhol, Nico (the focus of an unrequited crush) and Janis Joplin (with whom Cohen had one of music's most famous one-night stands).

Focusing on the man rather than his music, it's one for the committed Cohenophile. But then is there any other kind of Leonard Cohen fan?

Dave Everley

Rock Camp, The Movie

CEDAR HILLS MEDIA

Fly-on-the-wall view of the real-life School Of Rock.

"Rock stars were harmed during the making of this movie," announces a disclaimer for this behind-the-scenes look at the Rock 'N' Roll Fantasy Camp. Since 1986, promoter David Fishof has brought together A-listers including Roger Daltrey, Alice Cooper, Paul Stanley, Jeff

Beck, Slash and Nick Mason to teach ambitious music fans of all ages. This 90-minute documentary uses an avalanche of talking heads to examine how and why it happens.

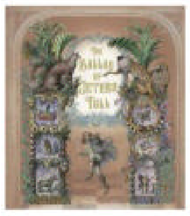
Having begun at $5,000 a pop in its first year, the experience isn't cheap but director Doug Blush captures the overflowing enthusiasm of the celeb counsellors and students. Have a box of tissues to hand as the torch is passed and both stars and students tell their inspiring stories.

Dave Ling

The Ballad Of Jethro Tull

Jethro Tull ROCKET 88

Crest of a knave.



It's only when you start reading the picture captions, which are clearly written by Ian Anderson, that you realise that this is the official ballad of Jethro Tull. Furthermore, Anderson has gone through his archives to furnish it with a wealth of unseen photos including out-takes of album cover shoots.

The story is told with quotes from the numerous band members, who are generously allowed freedom of expression, and they all seem to agree that the good times outweighed the bad, even the dark times of the late 70s.

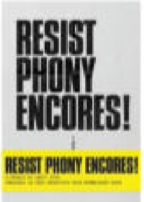
More emphasis could have been put on the early 70s when Tull were second only to Led Zeppelin in conquering America, but Anderson wants to tell the whole story. He regrets his "autocratic" behaviour in the late 70s and explains why he replaced the first line-up of the band with mates from Blackpool, where he grew up: "The truth is they were the only people I knew."

Hugh Fielder

Resist Phony Encores!

Gruff Rhys HAT & BEARD PRESS

Super Furry Animals singer transforms sloganeering placards into witty memoir.



In 2018, Super Furry Animals frontman-turned-folk-rock absurdist Gruff Rhys hosted a run of musically enhanced PowerPoint shows. Adapted from those, *Resist Phony Encores!* is an engaging mix of sketchy memoir, political manifesto and comedy monologue.

Skipping through his journey from Welsh-language band Ffa Coffi Pawb to SFA fame, solo career and side projects, Rhys reveals how he first began using giant cue cards to counter his naturally deadpan stage presence. These placards lead the singer into droll meditations on working with Damon Albarn and Paul McCartney, marching against the Iraq war, the perils of populist clowns like "racist British Prime Minister Boris Johnson" and more. Artfully assembled with a visually striking DIY fanzine aesthetic by Rhys and graphic designer Mark James, it's a fairly slight book, which probably worked better with live musical accompaniment. Even so, its full of wry jokes and thoughtful musings on life as a counterculture minstrel.

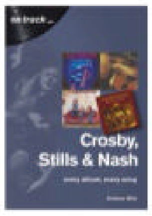
Stephen Dalton

On Track… Crosby, Stills & Nash: Every Album, Every Song

Andrew Wild

SONICBOND PUBLISHING

The stories behind the music.

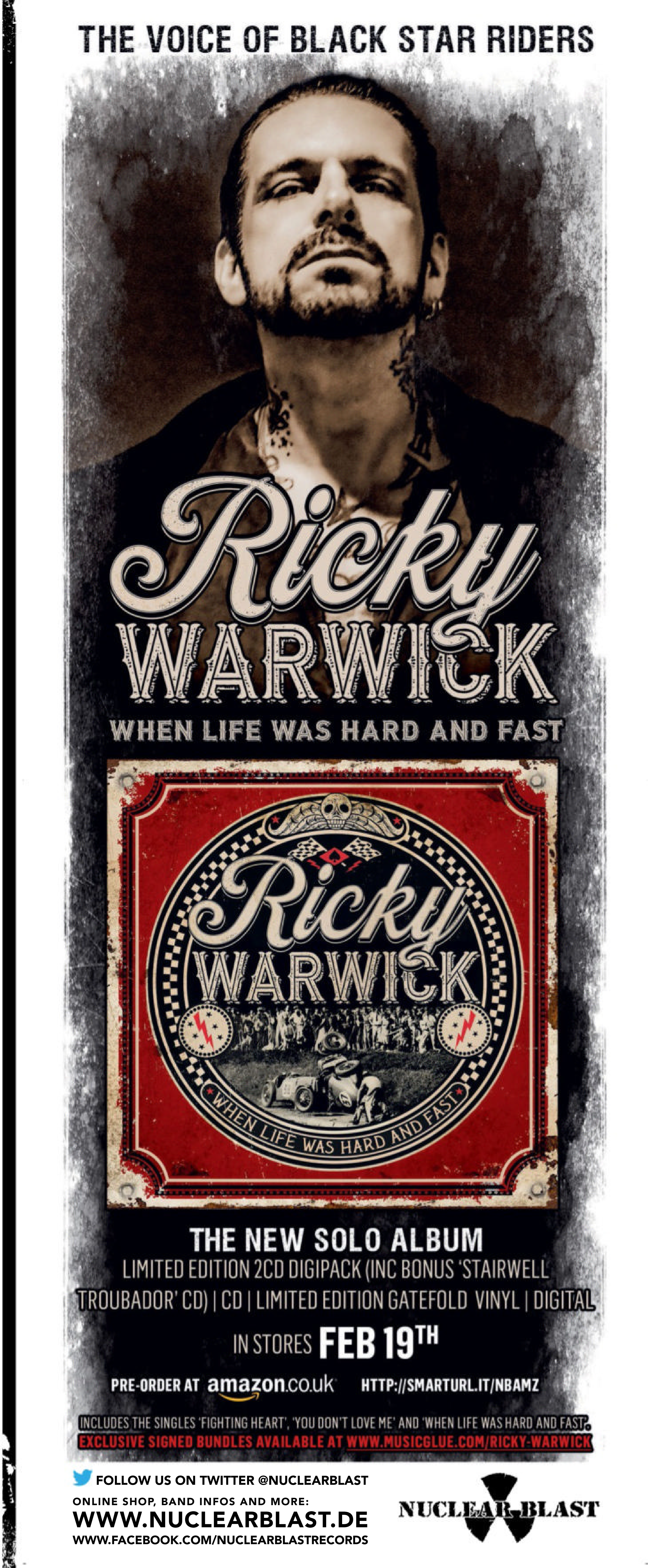


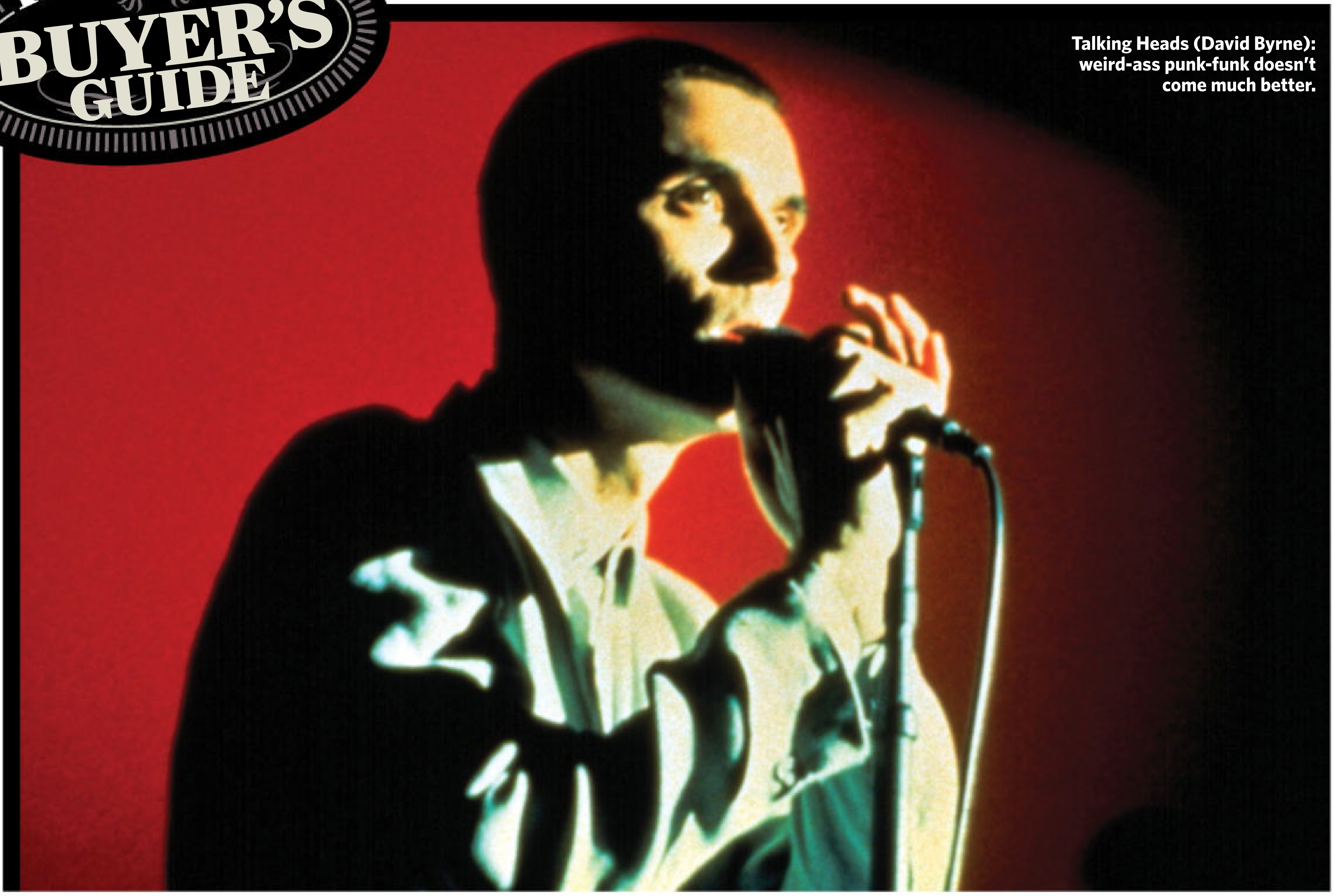
This well-researched little book is part of the *On Track…* series that is exactly what the title suggests: a run-through of every song and album released by Crosby, Stills & Nash – and CSNY, although there's less focus on Neil Young – from the B-sides to the big hitters.

Following a short intro and a timeline of the events that led to CSN forming, the songs are examined through a range of approaches including observations from the author, quotes from the band (there are no new interviews), excerpts from reviews, and details on aspects from lyrics to tunings. Some get more space than others – *Suite Judy Blue Eyes* has more than a page, while some lesser tracks get just a few lines – but it's not totally biased towards the hits, and a selection of photos and artwork are arranged in a separate section.

One for obsessives of the band who, as the author notes accurately, "exemplified the Woodstock generation".

Hannah May Kilroy




Talking Heads (David Byrne): weird-ass punk-funk doesn't come much better.

New wave/post-punk

After punk came a new wave of bands determined to do things differently – and often sounding very unalike.

'New wave' and 'post-punk' are terms used and abused with abandon when describing the music that followed the punk rock explosion of the mid-70s. To some people, new wave was the music made by bands who were too traditionally melodic to be classed as punk; bands that believed in good ol' songwriting, in *craft* and – shock horror – quite liked the idea of having a *hit* (step forward The Pretenders, Elvis Costello, The Police etc). To others, new wave music was the futuristic, keyboard-based music made by people inspired as much by Berlin-era Bowie and Kraftwerk's *Trans-Europe Express* as by punk itself (Human League, Cabaret Voltaire, Ultravox, Gary Numan et al). Then there's the 'art punks' – Wire, Gang Of Four, Pere Ubu, Delta 5, The Raincoats – bands obsessed with the form of their music, of avoiding 'rockist' clichés and aiming for something more avant-garde and challenging.

If these three camps are distinct enough, then consider that ska-punks like The Specials, The Beat and The Selecter are also considered part of the same movement/phenomenon, and suddenly you're faced with a musical genre that is futuristic yet retro, avant garde yet traditional, populist yet obscure, solipsistic on one hand, political on the other. Rather than describe a form of music, both 'new wave' and 'post-punk' are terms ascribed to a period in time – roughly from the split of the Sex Pistols and John Lydon's formation of the very post-punk PiL, until around 1984/85 when the new indie of The Smiths and the Jesus And Mary Chain ushered in a different scene. It describes artists inspired by punk in some way – maybe by its ability to address issues, its flouting of convention, or just by its sheer energy.

(By this rationale, the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal – metal with a punk attitude and energy – could be described as new wave or post-punk, of course, but let's sweep that one under the carpet before our heads explode.)

Our 'new wave' albums here, therefore, have been chosen to fit exceptionally woolly criteria. There are some unusual choices worth justifying: if the ska-punk of the Two Tone bands is considered new wave (for taking a punk attitude to Jamaican ska), then it stands to reason that both Dexy's Midnight Runners (punk attitude + soul music) and The Pogues (punk attitude + folk music) count too.

Of the others, the Skids are just woefully underrated, falling between two camps (not punk enough for punks, not arty enough for the futurists), and The Jam make it because, while it can be argued that they qualify as a genuine first-generation punk band, thousands don't agree. Plus, they *ruled* the early 80s.

Scott Rowley

Essential Classics

Talking Heads

Stop Making Sense *1999*

It was originally released in 1984, but it's the expanded edition of this live 'soundtrack' album that really does it justice. Talking Heads already had five studio albums and a live album under their belt at the time of its release and – following their *Speaking In Tongues* album – this live set and accompanying film catches them at their best.

Starting with just David Bryne, a beatbox and an acoustic guitar, and ending with about 6,000 people going apeshit on stage, most of the performances out-do their studio versions. Ecstatic, euphoric, weird-ass punk-funk doesn't come much better.

ALSO TRY *Speaking In Tongues*, Talking Heads

New Order

Power, Corruption & Lies

1983

No matter how dancey New Order got, fans of their rockier side were always cheered by a couple of songs on every album - pulsing rock songs with the best bass lines in rock and guitars that burst like crystal. It was a trend that started with this album.

Preceded by *Blue Monday*, *Power* continued the band's foray into dance music, but included some of their best guitar tracks. From the opening notes of the deliriously catchy *Age Of Consent*, it was obvious that with their second album New Order had become more than just the band that used to be Joy Division.

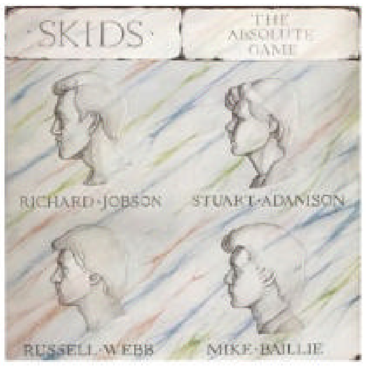
ALSO TRY *Technique*, New Order

ALAMY

Superior Reputation cementing

The Jam
Sound Affects *1980*

The Jam hit the 80s in style, going straight to No.1 with *Going Underground* in the summer, and following that with the chart-topping (and Beatles-robbing) *Start!* in August of 1980. But *Sound Affects* was no crowd-pleasing cash-in. Infused with the spirit of British psychedelia as well as the stark modernity of bands like Gang Of Four and Wire, Rick Buckler and Bruce Foxton prove themselves to be one of the best rock rhythm sections, while songs like *That's Entertainment* and *Man In The Corner Shop* established Paul Weller as a songwriter to equal Ray Davies.
ALSO TRY *Setting Sons*, The Jam



Skids
The Absolute Game *1980*

The Skids' last proper album (Richard Jobson stumbled on without guitar hero Stuart Adamson for one last, miserable, album in 1981), *The Absolute Game* is one of the great lost records of the period. Full of Adamson's trademark guitar playing (it can easily be seen as a partner to Big Country's debut *The Crossing*), it also has the band's most accessible and consistent set of songs. From the school kids' chorus of *Circus Games* to the epic solos of *Arena*, in its ambition, passion and sheer grandiosity it prefigured the so-called 'big music' of U2 and co.
ALSO TRY *The Crossing*, Big Country

Dexys Midnight Runners
Too-Rye-Ay *1982*

For their debut *Searching For The Young Soul Rebels*, Dexys dressed like a gang of bin men and talked about the purifying power of soul. For this one they slung on scarves and dungarees and sounded like Van Morrison's punky nephews, fired up with his vision of 'Celtic soul'. As well as school disco classic *Come On Eileen* – the horny flipside to the Specials' *Ghost Town* and just as important – *Too-Rye-Ay* is full of hits (*The Celtic Soul Brothers* and their cover of Van's *Jackie Wilson Said*), and bonkers epics like *Until I Believe In My Soul*.
ALSO TRY *Searching For The Young Soul Rebels*, Dexys Midnight Runners

Echo & The Bunnymen
Ocean Rain *1984*

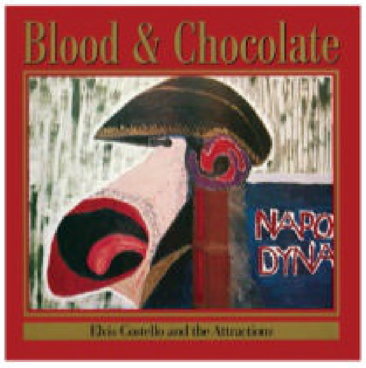
Promoted as 'the greatest album ever made', *Ocean Rain* may not be that good, but it's not that far off either. Songs like *Seven Seas* and *Crystal Days* were the perfect pop distillation of the Bunnymen's grand aesthetic, while *The Killing Moon* is just one of the great rock songs. It had lush orchestral backing – way before bands did that sorta thing – and, in *Thorn Of Crowns*, a bizarre, near-orgasmic shopping list of a song, with Mac stuttering the refrain, *'C-c-c-cucumber! C-c-c-cabbage! C-c-c-cauliflower!'* while the band kick up a storm.
ALSO TRY *Heaven Up Here*, Echo & The Bunnymen

Good Worth exploring

Simple Minds
Early Gold *2003*

It's easy to forget just how original, in-yer-face and – whisper it – proggy Simple Minds sounded in the early 80s. Born out of punk, in thrall to Bowie and Roxy, produced by Gong's Steve Hillage, and not afraid to groove, early Simple Minds (up until *Don't You Forget About Me* in 1985) were a thunderous, and wonderous, proposition.

Cherry picking from their early albums, *Early Gold* is the perfect place to start: *Chelsea Girl*, *The American*, *Love Song*, *Promised You A Miracle*… even the bass line for *Glittering Prize* is a thing of wonder.
ALSO TRY *Sparkle In The Rain*, Simple Minds



Elvis Costello And The Attractions
Blood & Chocolate *1986*

As if anticipating criticisms that he'd gone soft after 1986's *King Of America*, later that year Costello regrouped with the Attractions and banged out this vicious postcard from the edge. It opens with a grinding dirge called *Uncomplicated*, and goes into the second bitterest break-up song ever (*I Hope You're Happy Now*), before the manical world tour that is *Tokyo Storm Warning*. By the time you get to track five – the one that is the bitterest break-up song ever (*I Want You*) – you're either in the depths of despair or punching the air.
ALSO TRY *Imperial Bedroom*, Elvis Costello And The Attractions

Japan
Oil On Canvas *1983*

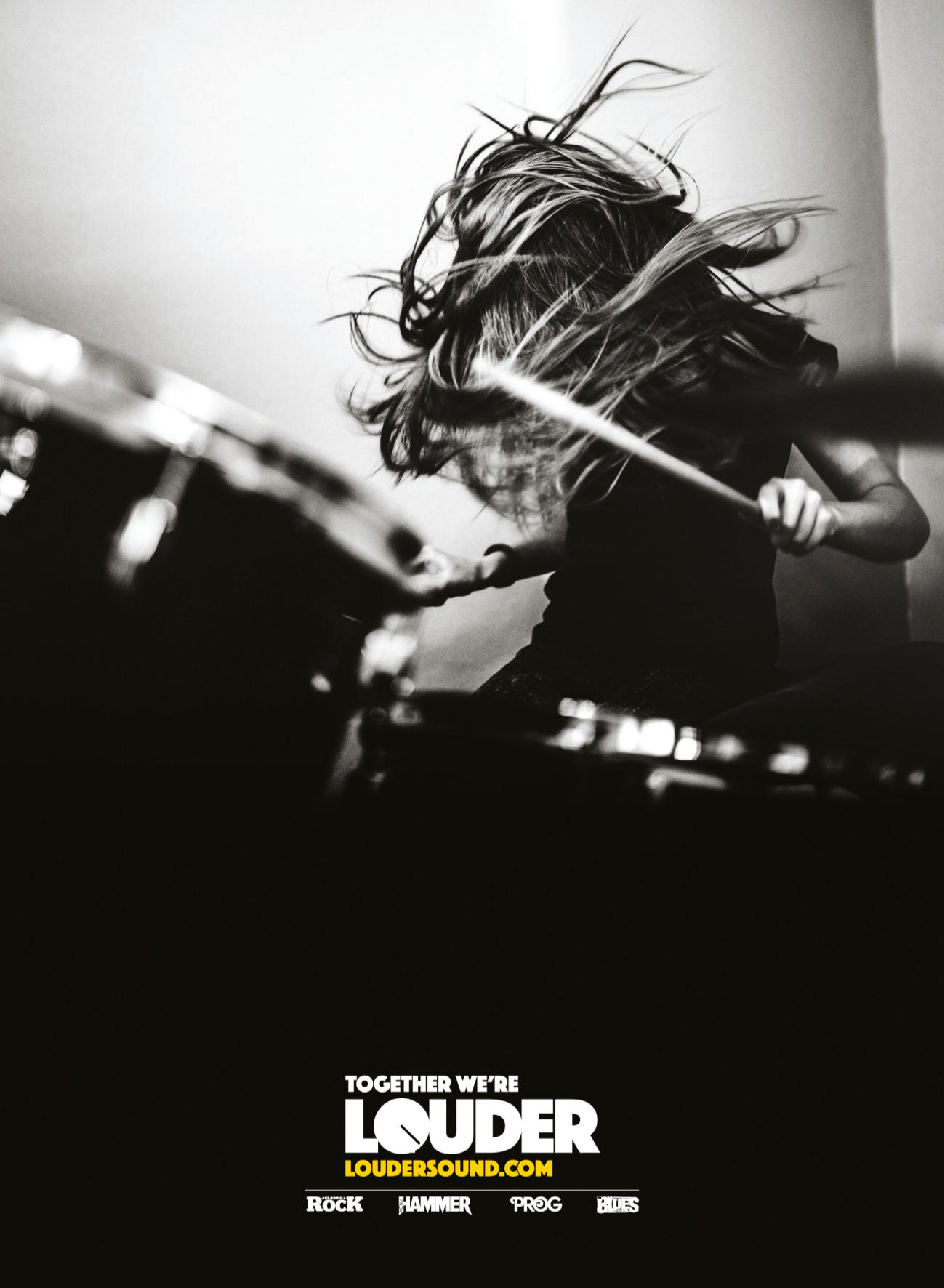
A posthumous release, this (mostly) live album is a great introduction to the band, dipping into their music from the glam 70s as well as their dreamier, proggier 80s stuff. Japan are, lest we forget, the band to whom Duran Duran owed their image and much of their sound (that whole Chic-meets-the-Sex-Pistols schtick) and if, in turn, Japan were too enamoured of Roxy Music, they had much to recommend: primarily Mick Karn's slippery fretless bass playing (see *Visions Of China*), and David Sylvian's alien crooning (showcased here on *Ghosts* – still one of the UK's oddest Top 10 singles).
ALSO TRY *Quiet Life*, Japan

The Pogues
Rum, Sodomy & The Lash *1985*

You can argue all you like that The Pogues weren't new wave or post-punk (see the intro for justification), but their brand of Irish folk-punk was fired up by the spirit of '77 and a direct reaction to the arty futurists who are stereotypically thought of as new wave. Produced by the very new wave Elvis Costello, songs like *The Sick Bed Of Cuchulainn* and *Sally MacLennane* are great examples of their fusion of punk fury and folk storytelling, while their versions of *Dirty Old Town* and *And The Band Played Waltzing Mathilda* have become definitive versions.
ALSO TRY *If I Should Fall From Grace With God*, The Pogues

Essential Playlist

The Teardrop Explodes – Reward
The Pogues – Sally MacLennane
Dexys Midnight Runners – There There My Dear
The Jam – That's Entertainment
Talking Heads – Once In A Lifetime
Martha & The Muffins – Echo Beach
Orange Juice – Falling And Laughing
Joy Division – Love Will Tear Us Apart
Icicle Works – Love Is A Wonderful Colour
The Specials – Ghost Town
Furniture – Brilliant Mind
Joy Division – Atmosphere
Kraftwerk – Tour De France
The Pretenders – Back On The Chain Gang
New Order – Age Of Consent
Japan – Ghosts
Skids – A Woman In Winter
Simple Minds – Chelsea Girl
Elvis Costello & The Attractions – Tokyo Storm Warning
Echo & The Bunnymen – The Killing Moon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CLASSIC ROCK
HAMMER
PROG
BLUES

Tour Dates

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

BRYAN ADAMS

Bristol	City Centre	Jun 26
Cardiff	Castle	Jun 27
Scarborough	Open Air Theatre	Jul 1
Widnes	Halton Stadium	Jul 2
Telford	QEII Arena	Jul 3
Cornwall	Eden Project	Jul 5
Powderham	Castle	Jul 6
Canterbury	Spitfire Ground	Jul 8
Cornbury	Music Festival	Jul 9
Leeds	Harewood House	Jul 10

AEROSMITH, RIVAL SONS

London	O2 Arena	Jun 23
Manchester	Arena	Jun 29
Sheffield	FlyDSA Arena	Jul 2

THE ALLMAN BETTS BAND

Cardiff	Globe	May 7
London	Highbury Garage	May 8
Manchester	Academy	May 9
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	May 11

ALL THEM WITCHES

Brighton	Chalk	Sep 27
Nottingham	Bodega	Sep 28
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Sep 29
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Sep 30
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 1

A NEW DAY FESTIVAL
JOHN LEES' BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST, THE CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN, MORE

Faversham	Mount Ephraim Gardens	Aug 20-22

ARCTANGENT FESTIVAL
OPETH, CULT OF LUNA, SWANS, MORE

Bristol	Fernhill Farm	Aug 19-21

ARENA

Liverpool	Academy	Oct 1
London	Camden Dingwalls	Oct 2
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 3
Kinross	Backstage At The Green Hotel	Oct 4

BAUHAUS

London	Alexandra Palace	Jun 3

BEAST IN BLACK

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Dec 1

BINGLEY WEEKENDER
PIXIES, PRIMAL SCREAM, THE LIBERTINES, MORE

Bradford & Bingley	Rugby Club	Aug 6-8

THE BLACK CROWES

London	Brixton Academy	Oct 23, 24
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 26

BLACK DEER FESTIVAL
SAVING GRACE FEATURING ROBERT PLANT & SUZI DIAN, WILKO, THE WATERBOYS, MORE

Kent	Eridge Park	Jun 18-20

BLACK STONE CHERRY, KRIS BARRAS BAND

Bristol	Academy	Sep 9
Birmingham	Academy	Sep 10
Lincoln	Engine Shed	Sep 11
Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 13
Leeds	Academy	Sep 14
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 16
Glasgow	Barrowland	Sep 17
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Sep 18
Newcastle	Academy	Sep 20
Liverpool	Academy	Sep 21
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Sep 23
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Sep 24
Exeter	Great Hall	Sep 25
Southampton	Guildhall	Sep 27
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Sep 28

BLONDIE, GARBAGE

Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Nov 6
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Nov 8
Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 9
Hull	Bonus Arena	Nov 11
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 12
Brighton	Centre	Nov 14
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 16
London	O2 Arena	Nov 18
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 20
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 21

BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL
JUDAS PRIEST, MERCYFUL FATE, DEVIN TOWNSEND, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 11-15

BRING ME THE HORIZON

Glasgow	The Hydro	Sep 21
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Sep 22
Sheffield	FlyDSA Arena	Sep 24
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Sep 25
London	O2 Arena	Sep 26

BROTHERS OSBORNE

Birmingham	Institute	May 10
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	May 11
Cambridge	Junction	May 13
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 14
Leeds	Academy	May 16
Manchester	Albert Hall	May 17

CALL OF THE WILD FESTIVAL
PHIL CAMPBELL & THE BASTARD SONS, MASSIVE WAGONS, WARRIOR SOUL, MORE

Lincoln	Lincolnshire Showground	Sep 18-20

CAMBRIDGE ROCK FESTIVAL
FOCUS, CATS IN SPACE, ATOMIC ROOSTER, MORE

Peterborough	East Of England Showground	Jun 17-20

Recommended

PHIL CAMPBELL & THE BASTARD SONS

Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 4
Manchester	Academy 3	Nov 6
Aberdeen	Unit 51	Nov 8
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 9
Carlisle	Brickyard	Nov 10
Bradford	Nightrain	Nov 13
Belfast	Limelight 2	Nov 14
Dublin	Grand Social	Nov 15
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 17
Bristol	Thekla	Nov 18
Bournemouth	Old Fire Station	Nov 19
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Nov 20

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

CARAVAN

Hampton	Pool	Jul 3
Basingstoke	Haymarket	Oct 6
London	Highbury Union Chapel	Oct 7
Gloucester	Guild Hall	Oct 8
Brighton	Old Market	Oct 9
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 14
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 15
Bury	The Met	Oct 16
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 17
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Oct 21
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 22
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Oct 23
Bristol	The Fleece	Oct 27
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Oct 28
Dover	Booking Hall	Oct 29

CATS IN SPACE

Chepstow	Castle	May 1
Reading	Sub 89	Jun 17
Cambridge	Rock Festival	Jun 18
Lancaster	Grand Theatre	Aug 26
Nottingham	Stonedead Festival	Aug 27
Bilston	Robin 2	Sep 2
Wavendon	The Stables	Sep 3
Hexham	Queens Hall	Sep 9
Sheffield	Rockin' The Bowl Festival	Sep 10
Norwich	Epic Studios	Sep 15
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Sep 16
Brighton	Concorde 2	Sep 23
London	Highbury Garage	Oct 2

ERIC CLAPTON

London	Royal Albert Hall	May 14, 15, 17, 18

CLEETHORPES ROCKS
MAN, CHANTEL McGREGOR, THESE WICKED RIVERS, MORE

Cleethorpes	Moon On The Water	Sep 19, 20

CORNWALL ROCKS
THE WILDHEARTS, PRAYING MANTIS, FOCUS, MORE

Looe	Tencreek Holiday Park	Oct 15-17

ROBERT CRAY BAND

Newcastle	City Hall	May 1
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	May 2
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 3
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	May 5
Buxton	Opera House	May 6
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	May 8
London	Cadogan Hall	May 19

AEROSMITH

Catch one of the truly great bands of their generation. Top songs and then some. Then some more.

See left for dates. Currently June 23,and 29 and July 2.

Portsmouth	Guildhall	May 11
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	May 12
Basingstoke	The Anvil	May 14
Birmingham	Town Hall	May 15
Oxford	New Theatre	May 16

THE CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN

Sale	Waterside Arts	May 27
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	May 28
Swindon	Wyvern Theatre	Jun 3
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Jun 4
Leeds	City Varieties	Jun 10
Lowestoft	Marina Theatre	Jun 11
Tewkesbury	Roses Theatre	Jun 12

THE DAMNED

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jul 9, 10
Birmingham	Academy	Jul 16
Glasgow	Academy	July 17
Manchester	Apollo	Jul 18

DANKO JONES

Bristol	Thekla	Dec 6
Newcastle	Cluny	Dec 7
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Dec 8
Nottingham	Bodega Social Club	Dec 9
Manchester	Rebellion	Dec 10
London	Camden Underworld	Dec 11

DEEP PURPLE, BLUE ÖYSTER CULT

Manchester	Arena	Oct 2
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Oct 3
Glasgow	The Hydro	Oct 5
London	O2 Arena	Oct 7
Birmingham	Arena	Oct 8

DIAMOND HEAD, ROCK GODDESS

Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Apr 22
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	Apr 23
Chester	Live Rooms	Apr 24
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Apr 25
Cambridge	Junction	Apr 27
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Apr 28
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 30
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 5
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	May 6
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	May 7
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 8

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL
KISS, MEGADETH, BIFFY CLYRO, MORE

Leicestershire	Donington Park	Jun 4-6

DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS, JERRY JOSEPH

Leeds	Stylus	May 29
Dublin	Vicar Street	May 30
Glasgow	SWG3 Studio	Jun 1
London	Kentish Town Forum	Jun 2
Brighton	Chalk	Jun 3

EAGLES

London	Wembley Stadium	Aug 28, 29

EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN

London	Kentish Town Forum	Sep 9

EVANESCENCE, WITHIN TEMPTATION

Glasgow	The Hydro	Sep 30
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Oct 1
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Oct 3
London	O2 Arena	Oct 4

EVERGREY, WITHERFALL, DUST IN MIND

London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	Oct 9
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 10
Bristol	The Fleece	Oct 11
Manchester	Academy 3	Oct 12
Newcastle	St Dom's Social Club	Oct 13
Glasgow	Cathouse	Oct 14
Dublin	Voodoo Lounge	Oct 15
Birmingham	Asylum 2	Oct 16

EXPERIENCE 1970
JOHN LODGE, PENTANGLE, ARTHUR BROWN, MORE

Freshwater (IoW)	East Afton Farm	Sep 3-5

FAITH NO MORE

Manchester	Apollo	Jun 7, 8
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 9
Birmingham	Academy	Jun 11
London	Brixton Academy	Jun 12, 13

BRIAN FALLON AND THE HOWLING WEATHER

Norwich	Waterfront	Dec 3
Leeds	Academy	Dec 4
Glasgow	SWG3	Dec 5
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 6
Bristol	Academy	Dec 8
Manchester	Academy	Dec 9
Birmingham	Institute	Dec 10
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Dec 11

SAMANTHA FISH

Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Sep 21
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Sep 22
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 23
Bath	Komedia	Feb 3
Manchester	Academy	Feb 4
Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 5
Cardiff	Tramshed	Feb 6
Brighton	Chalk	Feb 7

THE FLAMING LIPS

Galway	Big Top	Jul 17
Liverpool	Invisible Wind Factory	Jul 19
Aylesbury	Waterside Theatre	Jul 21
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Jul 25

FM

Hull	The Welly	Apr 2
Wakefield	Warehouse 23	Apr 3
Nantwich	Civic Hall	Apr 4
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Apr 4
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Apr 10
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	Apr 16
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Apr 17
Newcastle	University	Apr 23
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 24
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 1
Reading	Sub 89	May 2

GONG

Colchester	Arts Centre	May 3
Norwich	Arts Centre	May 4
Brighton	Komedia	May 5
Reading	Sub 89	May 6
Stroud	Subscription Rooms	May 7

KEVIN NIXON

LIVE!

Bristol	Thekla	May 9
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	May 10
Southampton	1865	May 11
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	May 12
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 13
York	Crescent	May 14
Hebden Bridge	Trades Club	May 15
Manchester	Gorilla	May 16
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	May 17
Carlisle	Brickyard	May 19
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 20
Stockton-On-Tees	Georgian Theatre	May 21
Hitchin	Club 85	May 22
Ramsgate	Music Room	May 27
London	Ladbroke Grove Subterania	May 28

GRAND SLAM, STARSEED

Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 7
Bradford	Night Train	Oct 8
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Oct 14
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Oct 15
Glasgow	Cathouse	Oct 16
Newcastle	Trillians	Oct 17
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Oct 20
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Oct 21
Swansea	Hangar 18	Oct 22
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Oct 23

GREEN DAY

London	London Stadium	Jun 25
Huddersfield	John Smith's Stadium	Jun 26
Glasgow	Green	Jun 28
Dublin	RDS Arena	Jun 30

GUN

Cambridge	Portland Arms	Sep 13
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 14
Cardiff	The Globe	Sep 15
Manchester	Night People	Sep 16
Keighley	Studio 5 Live	Sep 17
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 18

GUNS N' ROSES

London	Tottenham Hotspur Stadium	Jun 18, 19
Dublin	Marlay Park	Jun 22
Glasgow	Bellahouston Park	Jun 24

STEVE HACKETT

Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Sep 10
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Sep 11
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Sep 12
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Sep 14
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Sep 15
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Sep 17
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Sep 18
London	Palladium	Sep 20, 21, 22
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 24
Edinburgh	Playhouse	Sep 25
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 27
Dundee	Caird Hall	Sep 28
Scunthorpe	Baths Hall	Sep 30
Bradford	St George's Hall	Oct 1
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 2
Croydon	Fairfield Halls	Oct 4
Guildford	G Live	Oct 5
Brighton	Dome	Oct 7
Poole	Lighthouse	Oct 8
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 9
Southampton	Mayflower Theatre	Oct 11
Plymouth	Pavilions	Oct 12
Carlisle	Sands Centre	Oct 14
Stockton	The Globe	Oct 15
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 16
Aylesbury	Waterside	Oct 18
Oxford	New Theatre	Oct 19
Peterborough	Cresset Theatre	Oct 21
Harrogate	Royal Hall	Oct 22

HARD ROCK HELL
SKID ROW, WILDHEARTS, NAZARETH, WOLFSBANE, MORE

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Nov 4-7

HARD ROCK HELL GOTH & INDUSTRIAL
FIELDS OF THE NEPHILIM, MY DYING BRIDE, MORE

London	Kentish Tow Forum	Sep 11, 12
Leeds	Academy	Sep 11, 12

HARD ROCK HELL PROG
DAVE BROCK, COLOSSEUM, THRESHOLD, ATOMIC ROOSTER, MORE

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 4, 5
Sheffield	Academy	Sep 4, 5

HARD ROCK HELL SLEAZE
MICHAEL MONROE, QUIREBOYS, L.A. GUNS, MORE

SheffieldAcadedemy		Aug 28, 29

BETH HART

Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 29
York	Barbican	Oct 31
Bath	Forum	Nov 3
London	Palladium	Nov 5, 6

HAWKLORDS

Bedford	Esquires	Oct 14
Hastings	Black Market VIP	Oct 15
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	Oct 16
Cornwall	Rocks Festival	Oct 17

H.E.A.T, VEGA, MASON HILL, COLLATERAL

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 7
Leeds	Warehouse	Oct 8
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Oct 10
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 11
London	Camden Electric Brixton	Oct 12

HELLOWEEN, DIRKSCHNEIDER

Manchester	Academy	May 22
London	Brixton Academy	May 23

HOLLYWOOD VAMPIRES, KILLING JOKE

Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Aug 5
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Aug 6
Glasgow	Hydro	Aug 7
London	O2 Arena	Aug 9

IQ

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Sep 4
London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	Dec 10

ROBERT JON & THE WRECK

Aberdeen	Drummonds	May 2
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	May 4
Manchester	Night & Day Café	May 5
Nottingham	Bodega	May 6
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 7
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 10
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 11
Sittingbourne	Bourne Music Club	May 12

KANSAS

London	Palladium	Nov 4

KARNIVOOL

Birmingham	Institute	Sep 25
Leeds	Stylus	Sep 26
Glasgow	Garage	Sep 27
Manchester	Academy 2	Sep 29
London	Kentish Town Forum	Sep 30
Bristol	SWX	Oct 1

KING KING

Leeds	Stylus	Oct 15
Bristol	Academy	Oct 16
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Oct 17
Bexhill	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 19
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 20
Cambridge	Junction	Oct 22
Sheffield	Academy	Oct 23
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Oct 24
York	Grand Opera House	Feb 10
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Feb 11
Manchester	Academy	Feb 17
Sheffield	Leadmill	Feb 19
Cardiff	Y Plas	Feb 10
Birmingham	Town Hall	Feb 22
Bury St Edmunds	Apex Arts Centre	Feb 23
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Feb 24

LARKIN POE

Southampton	Engine Rooms	Nov 19
Bristol	SWX	Nov 20
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 21
Glasgow	SWG3 Galvanizers	Nov 23
Dublin	Vicar Street	Nov 24
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 26
Brighton	Chalk	Nov 27
Oxford	Academy	Nov 28
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 30

LEEDS BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
DR FEELGOOD, KRIS BARRAS, FÉLIX RABIN, MORE

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 9

JOHN LEES' BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Oct 14
Salisbury	City Hall	Oct 15
Leeds	City Varieties	Oct 16
Manchester	RNCM	Nov 20

LINCOLN BLUES FESTIVAL
DR FEELGOOD, KRIS BARRAS, BIG DADDY WILSON, MORE

Lincoln	Drill Hall	May 8

LOOE BLUES FESTIVAL
AYNSLEY LISTER, THE ANIMALS, MARTIN TURNER, MORE

Looe	Tencreek Holiday Park	Mar 19-21

LONDON ROCKS
KEN PULSTENIK'S GROUNDHOGS, JOHN VERITY BAND, XANDER & THE PEACE PIRATES

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 21

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

BLONDIE

With Garbage along for the ride as support, you can look forward to a procession of big hits and classy cuts.

See page 99 for dates. Currently November 6 to 21.

GETTY

MAGNUM

Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 16
Sheffield	Leadmill	Sep 17
Norwich	Waterfront	Sep 19
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Sep 20
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Sep 21
Cardiff	Tramshed	Sep 22
Manchester	Academy 2	Sep 24
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Sep 25
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Sep 27
Cambridge	Junction	Sep 29
Glasgow	Garage	Sep 30
Dublin	Voodoo Lounge	Oct 2
Belfast	Limelight 1	Oct 3

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Jul 16, 17

MARILLION

Hull	City Hall	Nov 14
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Nov 15
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Nov 17
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Nov 18
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Nov 20
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Nov 21
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Nov 23
Bath	Forum	Nov 24
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 26, 27

NICK MASON'S SAUCERFUL OF SECRETS

Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Apr 13
Guildford	G Live	Apr 14
Croydon	Fairfield Halls	Apr 16
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 18
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Apr 19
Sheffield	City Hall	Apr 20
London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 22
Plymouth	Pavilions	Apr 24
Brighton	Dome	Apr 26
Bath	Forum	Apr 27
Oxford	New Theatre	Apr 29
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	Apr 30
Cardiff	St David's Hall	May 1
Liverpool	Philharmonic	May 3
York	Barbican	May 4
Newcastle	City Hall	May 5
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 7
Manchester	Apollo	May 8
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	May 9

Recommended

MASSIVE WAGONS

London	Islington Academy	Sep 11
Sheffield	Rockin' The Bowl	Sep 12
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 13
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Sep 15
Exeter	Cavern Club	Sep 17
Birmingham	Academy 2	Sep 18
Manchester	Club Academy	Sep 19
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Sep 21
Cardiff	The Globe	Sep 22
Newcastle	Riverside	Sep 23
Liverpool	Hangar 34	Sep 25
Glasgow	Garage	Sep 26

MONSTER FEST
FM, THE WILDHEARTS, MARCO MENDOZA, MORE

Inverness	Ironworks	Nov 12-15

FANTASTIC NEGRITO

London	Camden Jazz Café	Mar 29

NEW MODEL ARMY

Dublin	Temple Bar	Oct 1, 2
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 26, 27
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Dec 4, 5

NHS THANKYOU CONCERT
THE WILDHEARTS, BIG COUNTRY, THE BREW, MORE

Cleethorpes	Meridian Park	Jul 31

NIGHTWISH, AMORPHIS, TURMION KÄTILÖT

Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	May 1
London	Wembley Arena	May 2

THE NIMMO BROTHERS

Clitheroe	The Grand	Jul 13
NewburyArlington Arts Centre		Jul 14
Wavendon	The Stables	Jul 15

OPETH

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 16

ORANGE GOBLIN, SPIRIT ADRIFT, KING CREATURE

Buckley	Tivoli	Dec 9
Belfast	Limelight 2	Dec 10
Dublin	Grand Social	Dec 11
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Dec 13
Manchester	Gorilla	Dec 14
Birmingham	Asylum	Dec 15
Cardiff	Globe	Dec 16
London	Camden Underworld	Dec 17, 18

PARADISE LOST

Leeds	Warehouse	May 1

PARTY AT THE PARK
KAISER CHIEFS, GUN, ASH, MORE

Perth	Lesser South Inch Park	Jun 26, 27

PEARL JAM

London	British Summer Time Festival	Jul 9, 10

THE PINEAPPLE THIEF WITH GAVIN HARRISON

Dublin	Button Factory	Oct 5
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Oct 6
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 7
Bristol	SWX	Oct 8
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 30

PURE REASON REVOLUTION,

QUEEN + ADAM LAMBERT

London	O2 Arena	Jun 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 16, 17, 19, 20
Manchester	Arena	Jun 10, 11
Birmingham	Arena	Jun 13, 14

QUIREBOYS, MASSIVE

Bristol	Thekla	Jun 4
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Jun 5

Oxford	The Bullingdon	Jun 18
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Jun 19
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 14
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Oct 15
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 18
Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 19
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	Nov 20
Manchester	Academy	Nov 26
Gloucester	Guildhall	Nov 27
Brighton	Concorde 2	Jan 21
Birmingham	Institute	Jan 22

RAMBLIN' MAN FAIR
EUROPE, MONSTER MAGNET, CLUTCH, BIG BIG TRAIN, FOGHAT, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jul 16-18

RAMMSTEIN

Belfast	Boucher Road Playing Fields	Jun 12
Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Jun 16
Coventry	Ricoh Arena	Jun 19

READING/LEEDS FESTIVAL
QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE, LIAM GALLAGHER, MORE

Reading	Richfield Avenue	Aug 27-29
Leeds	Braham Park	Aug 27-29

REDD KROSS

Brighton	The Albert	May 3
Bristol	The Exchange	May 4
Manchester	Deaf Institute	May 5
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 6
Glasgow	Broadcast	May 7
London	Islington The Lexington	May 9, 10

RHINO'S REVENGE

Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Jun 4
Kinross	Green Hotel	Jun 5
Chesterfield	Real Time Live	Jun 6
Winchester	The Railway	Jun 11
Horsham	REC Rooms	Jun 12

ROCK AND BLUES CUSTOM SHOW
MONSTER TRUCK, THOSE DAMN CROWS, MYKE GRAY FEAT KIM JENNETT, MORE

Pentrich	Coney Grey Showground	Jul 29-31

ROCK AT THE BAY
SON OF MAN, BUCK & EVANS, BUFFALO SUMMER, MORE

Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Jun 5

ROCKIN' THE BOWL
DORO, MASSIVE WAGONS, CATS IN SPACE, MORE

Sheffield	Don Valley Bowl	Sep 10-12

ROSE TATTOO

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Jul 19
Birmingham	Institute 2	Jul 20
Glasgow	SWG3	Jul 21

JOE SATRIANI

Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 30
Bexhill	De La Warr Pavilion	May 1
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 2
London	Palladium	May 4
Gateshead	The Sage	May 5
Glasgow	Academy	May 6

SAXON

London	Hammersmith Apollo	May 1
Glasgow	Barrowland	May 2
Manchester	Apollo	May 3

MICHAEL SCHENKER GROUP, DORO

Leeds	Academy	Oct 28
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 29
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 30
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 31

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR

Oxford	Academy 2	Apr 6
Swansea	Sin City	Apr 7
Kendal	Brewery Arts Centre	Apr 9
Liverpool	Arts Club	Apr 10
Nottingham	Glee Club	Apr 11
Edinburgh	Liquid Rooms	Apr 13
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Apr 14
Leeds	Warehouse	Apr 15
Newcastle	Riverside	Apr 16

KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD

Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 15
Salisbury	City Hall	Oct 17
Gateshead	Tyne Theatre	Oct 19
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Oct 20
Warrington	Parr Hall	Oct 21

SKINDRED, ROYAL REPUBLIC

Cambridge	Junction	Sep 23
Oxford	Academy	Sep 24
Northampton	Roadmender	Sep 25
Leeds	Academy	Sep 30
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 1

London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Oct 2
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 7
Bristol	Academy	Oct 8
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 9
Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 10
Southampton	Guildhall	Oct 15
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 22
Newcastle	University	Oct 23
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 29
Manchester	Academy	Oct 30
Norwich	UEA	Oct 31

SKUNK ANANSIE

Cardiff	University	Jun 7
Nottingham	Rock City	Jun 8
Lincoln	Engine Shed	Jun 9
Newcastle	Academy	Jun 11
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 13
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Jun 14
Norwich	UEA	Jun 15
London	Meltdown Festival	Jun 17
Sheffield	Academy	Jun 18
Birmingham	Academy 1	Jun 19
Brighton	Dome	Jun 21
Guildford	G Live	Jun 22
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Jun 23
Leeds	Academy	Jun 25
Bristol	Academy	Jun 26
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Jun 29
Leicester	Academy	Jun 30
London	Brixton Academy	Jul 2

SNAKE OIL AND HARMONY, NATE BERGMAN

Aberdare	Jacs	Nov 26
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 27
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Nov 28
Manchester	Night People	Sat 29
London	Putney Half Moon	Nov 30
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Dec 2
Bradford	Nightrain	Dec 3
Nottingham	Billy Bootleggers	Dec 4
Bilston	Robin 2	Dec 5
Chester	Live Rooms	Dec 7
Glasgow	Cottiers Theatre	Dec 8
Newcastle	The Cluny	Dec 9
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Dec 10
Ballymena	Diamond Rock Bar	Dec 11

SOS FESTIVAL
MYKE GRAY FEAT KIM JENNETT, PISTON, HANDS OFF GRETEL, MORE

Prestwich	Longfield Suite	Jul 2-4

SOUTHPORT BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
THE ANIMALS, HENRIK FREISCHLADER, KYLA BROX, MORE

Southport	The Atkinson	May 23

STEELHOUSE FESTIVAL
EUROPE, ANTHRAX, THERAPY?, MORE

Ebbw Vale	Hafod-y-Dafal Farm	Jul 23-25

STONE BROKEN, PHIL X & THE DRILLS, THE FALLEN STATE

Norwich	Waterfront	Apr 18
Manchester	Academy 2	Apr 19
Newcastle	Riverside	Apr 20
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 21
Cardiff	University	Apr 23
Bristol	SWX	Apr 24
Exeter	Lemon Grove	Apr 25
Brighton	Chalk	Apr 26
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Apr 28
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Apr 29
Birmingham	Institute	Apr 30

THE STRUTS (UNPLUGGED)

Sheffield	Foundry	Mar 1
Leeds	Wardrobe	Mar 2
Kingston-upon-Thames	Pryzm	Mar 3
Southampton	1896	Mar 4

SWEET

Brighton	Chalk	Nov 25
Southampton	1865	Nov 26
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Nov 27
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 28
Birmingham	Town Hall	Dec 2
Shrewsbury	Buttermarket	Dec 3
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Dec 4
Norwich	Waterfront	Dec 5
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Dec 8
Glasgow	Garage	Dec 9
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Dec 10
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Dec 11
Cardiff	University	Dec 17
Manchester	Academy	Dec 18
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 19
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Dec 20

GEOFF TATE

Belfast	Limelight	Apr 23
Dublin	Lost Lane	Apr 24
London	Camden Underworld	Apr 26

DANKO JONES

As a performer Danko's been compared to "a panther on heat". Curious? Check out the Canadian fireball (and his trio).

See previous page for dates. Currently December 6 to 11.

Bilston	Robin 2	Apr 27
Newcastle	Trillians	Apr 28
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 29
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Apr 30
Inverness	Mad Hatters	May 3
Edinburgh	Bannermans Bar	May 5
Glasgow	Cathouse	May 7
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	May 9
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	May 13
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	May 14
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	May 15

THERAPY?

Brighton	Concorde 2	May 5
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	May 6
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	May 7
Manchester	The Ritz	May 8
Cardiff	Tramshed	May 10
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	May 11
Bristol	SWX	May 13
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 14
Nottingham	Rock City	May 15
Cambridge	Junction	May 17
Newcastle	Riverside	May 26
Glasgow	Garage	May 27
Hull	The Welly	May 28
Norwich	Waterfront	May 29

GEORGE THOROGOOD

Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Jul 23
London	Shepherds Bush Empire	Jul 25
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Jul 26
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jul 28
York	Barbican	Jul 30
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Jul 31
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Aug 1

THUNDER, UGLY KID JOE

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	May 13
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	May 14
London	Wembley Arena	May 15
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 22
Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	May 23

ROBIN TROWER, SARI SCHORR

Southampton	The Brook	Apr 21
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Apr 22
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Apr 24

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH

Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Feb 11
Sutton	Boom Boom Club	Feb 12
Dartmouth	Flavel Arts Centre	Feb 14
Selby	Town Hall	Feb 25
Derby	Flowerpot	Mar 5
Cornwall	Tencreek Holiday Park	Mar 20
Havant	Spring Arts & Heritage Centre	Apr 9
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Apr 16
Hessle	Town Hall	Apr 23
Knaresborough	Frazer Theatre	Apr 24
Twickenham	Eel Pie Club	Apr 29

URIAH HEEP

Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 29
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Sep 30
London	Palladium	Oct 3
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 4
Gateshead	The Sage	Oct 5
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 6

Recommended

RICKY WARWICK & THE FIGHTING HEARTS, VIRGINMARYS

Cambridge	Junction	Apr 28
Norwich	Waterfront	Apr 29
Bedford	Esquires	Apr 30
Swansea	Sound Bay Festival	May 1
London	Islington Academy	May 2
Newcastle	University Students Union	May 4
Glasgow	Garage G2	May 5
Belfast	Limelight 2	May 6
Manchester	Club Academy	May 7
Carlisle	Brickyard	May 8
Buckley	Tivoli	May 9
Reading	Sub 89	May 12
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 13
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	May 14, 15
Leeds	Warehouse	May 16
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	May 19
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 20
Lincoln	Call Of The Wild Festival	May 21

WAYWARD SONS

Dublin	Opium	Nov 6
Belfast	Limelight 2	Nov 7
Manchester	Academy 3	Nov 9
Glasgow	Cathouse	Nov 10
Newcastle	Riverside	Nov 11
Leeds	Wardrobe	Nov 13
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 14
Bristol	Thekla	Nov 15
London	Islington Academy	Nov 17
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 18

WEYFEST
MASON HILL, XANDER & THE PEACE PIRATES, ELLES BAILEY, MORE

Farnham	Rural Life Living Museum	Aug 20-22

STEVEN WILSON

Cardiff	St David's Hall	Sep 8
Sheffield	City Hall	Sep 9
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 11
Glasgow	Concert Hall	Sep 12
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Sep 13
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Sep 15
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Sep 16
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 17

WISHBONE ASH

Honiton	The Beehive	Nov 13
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Nov 14
London	Islington Academy	Nov 18

Y&T

Southampton	The Brook	Oct 26
Norwich	Waterfront	Oct 27
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 29
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Oct 30
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 31
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 30
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 4
Newcastle	Academy	Nov 5
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Nov 6
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 7

GETTY

A Bowie Celebration/ Lazarus

Two major streamed events celebrate the work of the starman, with much pomp, splendour and an A-list cast.

Five years after he was recalled to his home galaxy, David Bowie's loss still feels like a major rupture, an annual cenotaph-style pause for mass mourning even in the depths of the covid crisis. On the weekend that straddles both the late starman's 74th birthday and the anniversary of his death, these two major livestream events are welcome reminders not just of his enduring musical genius, but also his spectacular pretentiousness and gloriously overblown naffness. Often overlooked amid all the posthumous highbrow reverence, preposterous peacock poncery is a crucial part of Bowie's legacy too.

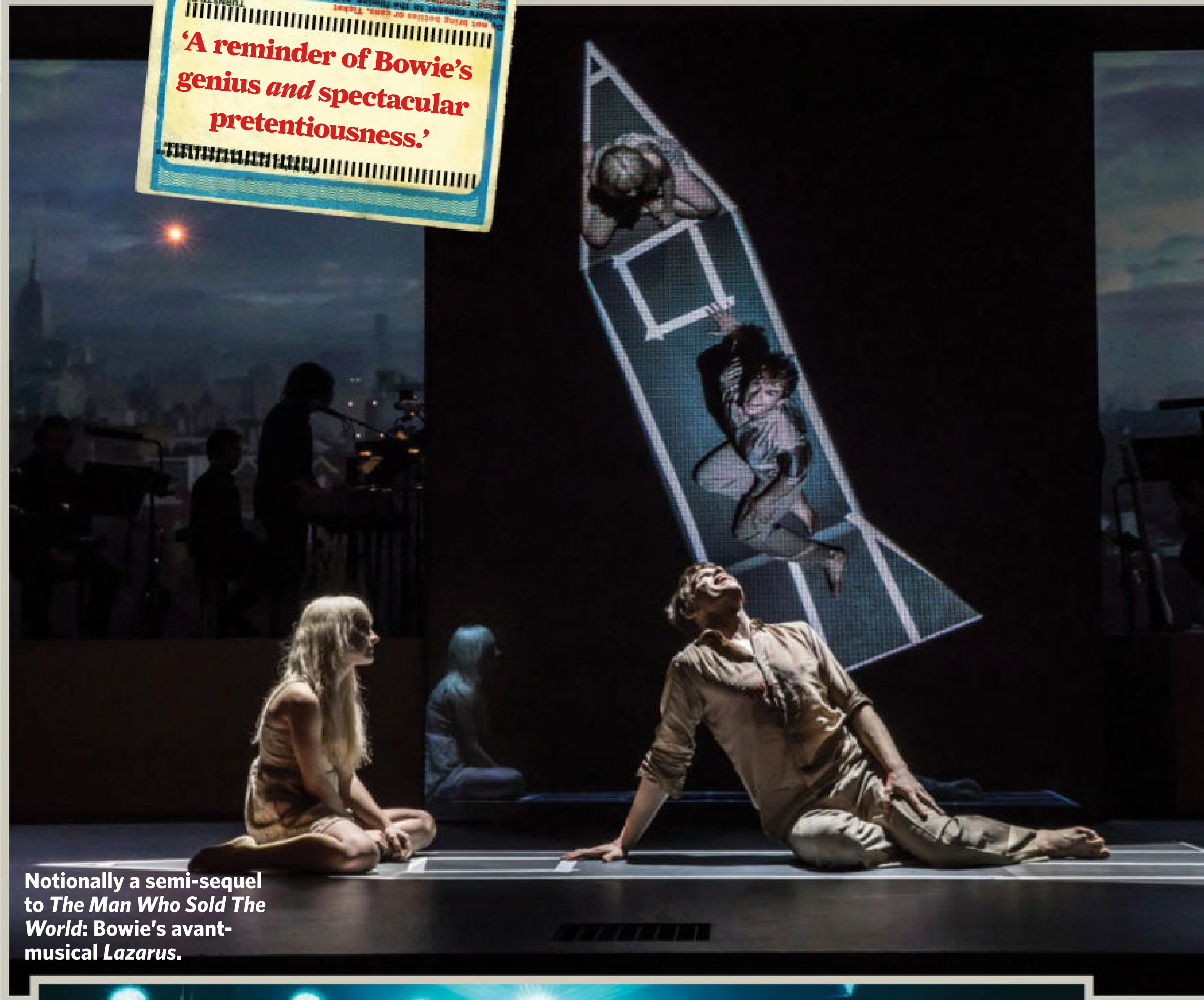
An off-Broadway avant-musical that was playing to packed houses when Bowie died, *Lazarus* remains a ripe old bag of onions. It is notionally a semi-sequel to *The Man Who Fell To Earth*, with Michael C Hall stepping into Bowie's screen role as Thomas Jerome Newton, an extra-terrestrial Howard Hughes tormented by long-lost love and boozy hallucination. The fairy-tale plot is an overstuffed mess, but director Ivo van Hove's stylish production still dazzles with high-art visuals and superbly staged musical numbers. It's the freakiest show, but full of interesting touches, especially the knowing parallels with Bowie's own life and his looming death.

More all-you-can-eat buffet than sombre memorial, A Bowie Celebration is a celeb-stuffed charity gala hosted by Bowie's long-serving piano maestro Mike Garson and featuring a stellar supergroup of alumni including Tony Visconti, Carlos Alomar, Gail Ann Dorsey, Earl Slick, Peter Frampton and Rick Wakeman.

With most of the players beaming in their performances via socially distanced TV screens, this oddly clunky broadcast show looks like a Zoom-era mash-up of *Celebrity Squares* and *The X Factor*. A comically stiff and awkward presenter, Garson plays along to every number in avant-jazz Jools Holland mode.

Mirroring Bowie's career, there are bumpy detours and bizarre choices here. If the emphasis on his glam-heavy early 1970s is forgivable, the complete absence of material from landmark avant-rock albums like *Station To Station* or *Low* is harder to justify. The sole *"Heroes"* nod is the title track, powered by a soulfully impassioned vocal from Bernard Fowler. Trent Reznor also croons an elegant electro-krautrock arrangement of *Fantastic*

'A reminder of Bowie's genius *and* spectacular pretentiousness.'



Notionally a semi-sequel to *The Man Who Sold The World*: Bowie's avant-musical *Lazarus*.

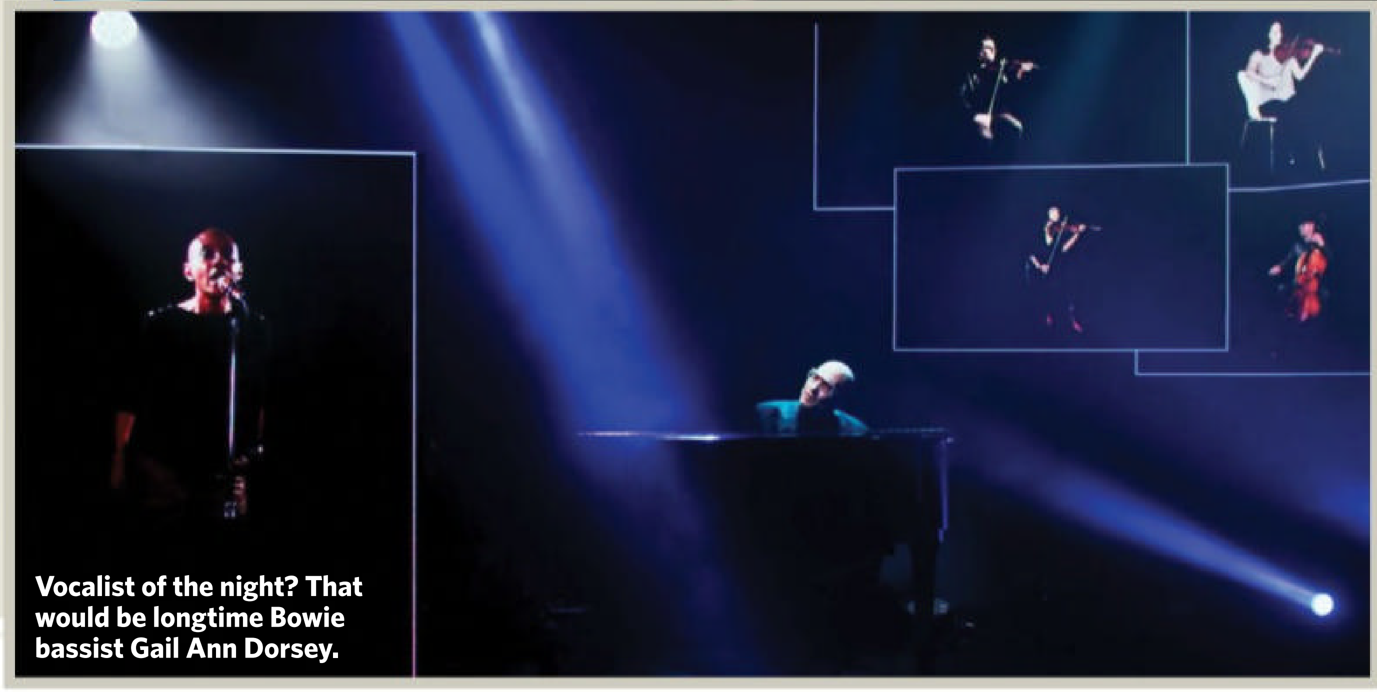
An old friend sings: Joe Elliott (inset) brings plenty of Yorkshire muscle.

Another old chum: Ian Hunter delivers a lusty *All The Young Dudes*.

Adam Lambert brings high-voltage drama to *Starman*.

The Man Who Sold The World: for tonight, anyway, it's Perry Farrell.

Looking for someone? Duran Duran deliver a glossy *Five Years*.



Vocalist of the night? That would be longtime Bowie bassist Gail Ann Dorsey.

Voyage from *Lodger*. But such squeamishness towards Bowie's most fertile, experimental period undersells his range and impact.

Even when the choices are more imaginative, some vocal guests are simply a bad fit. Macy Gray's smoky growl is a gorgeous instrument, but she struggles with the wistful South London romanticism of Bowie's classic mod-memoir *Changes*. And while Boy George's *Aladdin Sane* medley is heartfelt, it shades into bloodless cabaret. In fairness, the only real howler is raddled Bill Nighy-lookalike Charlie Sexton, former teenage guitar hero and opening act on Bowie's much-derided Glass Spider tour in 1987, who Garson over-indulges with piss-weak pub-rock karaoke versions of *Let's Dance*, *Rebel Rebel*, *DJ* and more. All fall wanking to the floor.

Fortunately there are enough inspired reinventions and knockout performances to excuse the duds: Duran Duran pay respectable homage to their art-ponce guru with a glossy, string-couched *Five Years*; Billy Corgan reimagines *Space Oddity* as a shimmering, woozy sci-fi lullaby; Perry Farrell plays macabre court jester in a stylised, David Lynch-ian staging of *The Man Who Sold The World*; Anna Calvi, Corey Taylor, Lzzy Hale, Taylor Hawkins and Dave Navarro all find

"The line between high-camp excess and high-art genius is often blurred."

their personal Bowie, from sultry jazz chansons to garage-punk slammers.

Among Bowie's older friends and contemporaries, 81-year-old Ian Hunter proves impressively lusty on *All The Young Dudes,* while Def Leppard's Joe Elliott brings plenty of South Yorkshire muscle to *Ziggy Stardust* and *Win*. Doing his best Clive Dunn impersonation, actor Gary Oldman also wrings conviction from Tin Machine's *I Can't Read*. But the show's slam-dunk vocal champion is unquestionably long-serving Bowie bassist Gail Ann Dorsey, whose majestic rendition of *Can You Hear Me,* from *Young Americans,* lends great warmth and emotion to the late star's fabled 'plastic soul' phase. An entire album of Dorsey covering Bowie? Yes please.

In pure show-stopping terms, contemporary glam-pop idols Yungblud and Adam Lambert also bring high-voltage drama to *Life On Mars?* and *Starman* respectively, each channelling some of Bowie's alien-loving gender-blurring queer-punk charisma. As the late space-rock superstar himself realised astutely, the line between high-camp excess and high-art genius is often deliciously blurred.

Despite a few wobbly moments, Garson serves up a fine musical banquet, with a little help from his friends.

Stephen Dalton

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WED 14 EDINBURGH BANNERMANS
THU 15 KINROSS GREEN HOTEL

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SUN 09 LEEDS BLUES FESTIVAL
FRI 14 STAMFORD MAMMA LIZ'S
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SUN 09 LEEDS BLUES FESTIVAL
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THU 13 BILSTON ROBIN 2

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Kris Barras Band

Kris-Mas Party livestream.

Barras and co. overcome playing alone.

★ Kris Barras recently admitted that he finds it strange performing in front of a bank of cameras rather than people. Thankfully he overcomes this problem in this two-hour performance at Momentum Studios in Plymouth, which is split into two parts.

Firstly, he and Josiah J Manning deliver a 30-minute acoustic set on guitars that is enticing and intimate. But this is really no more than a taster for the full on electric delivery, when Barras and Manning (who switches to keyboards) are joined by bassist Kelpie McKenzie and drummer Billy Hammett. They kick off with *Ignite (Light It Up)* and *Counterfeit People* and the energy level never drops.

Hammett is actually separate from the others, playing in his own cubicle, but that actually adds something extra to the event, as he has his own camera to capture what's going on.

As well as the songs the band play regularly live, they also throw in the occasional surprise, such as *Wound Up (Light It Up)*, which inexplicably they've never done on stage before. Barras does seem to struggle a little to talk to the disembodied audience between songs, but this doesn't matter one bit, and the performance climaxes with the spectacular *Hail Mary*, which is followed by an appropriately joyous cover of Slade's *Merry Xmas Everybody*.

Tonight Kris Barras and co. prove they're a fine band under any circumstances.

Malcolm Dome

Kiss Goodbye To 2020

Dubai Atlantis The Palm

Goodness, gracious, great balls of fire!

★ Kiss have always followed the philosophy of celebrated Hollywood film director Cecil B DeMille: start with a climax and build from there. But even by Kiss's own long-established standards this is a manic spectacle.

Not only do Kiss have the biggest stage set of their career, they've also spent an incredible $1.5 million on pyro. One of their aims was to get into the *Guinness Book Of World Records* for the highest flame projection at a concert and also for the most simultaneous flame columns unleashed during a gig. And they succeed in both aims.

While the visual extravagance is truly remarkable, thankfully Kiss deliver on a musical level as well. Highlights abound, with *I Love It Loud*, *Lick It Up* (featuring a snippet from The Who's *Won't Get Fooled Again*), *Shout It Out Loud* and main set closer *Black Diamond* hitting the heights. It helps that there is a live audience, on hotel room balconies just a little removed from the stage area, who make a lot of welcome noise, thereby adding to the atmosphere.

Inevitably *Rock And Roll All Nite* is the final encore song – what else?! - as the stage and surrounding area are literally engulfed in flame and fireworks.

Even Kiss will perhaps never top what they do here tonight. In every sense it is overload.

Malcolm Dome

THE DARKNESS: JENNY MAY FINN

'The Darkness deliver scorching versions of vintage anthems.'

No smell of the crowd tonight... Below: Justin Hawkins falls back on a reliable guitar-hero pose.

The Darkness: Streaming Of A White Christmas

London Indigo At The O2

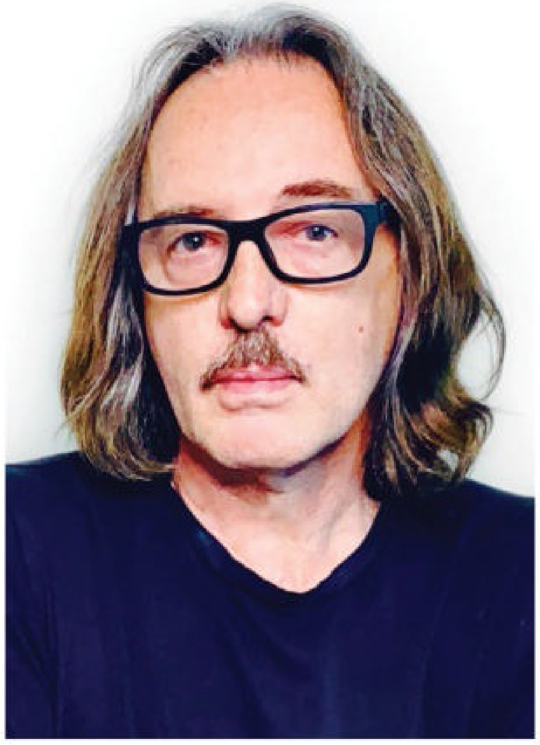
Plenty of cheer – and to cheer – despite the lack of seasonal trimmings.

★ More than most bands grounded by covid, The Darkness truly belong on a live stage. So it comes as no surprise that after a year in lockdown these panto-metal piss-takers hurl themselves into livestreaming balls-first in this swashbuckling Christmas special, performing to a handful of socially distanced fans and a much larger online audience.

Lithe and ripped at 45, Justin Hawkins is closer than ever to becoming the tattoo-covered rock god he always dreamed of being: half Johnny Depp, half Jarvis Cocker, with a perfumed whiff of syphilitic Regency dandy for good measure. Introducing the glorious glam-metal stampede *Friday Night*, he muses: "This is a song for anybody who has ever done… anything, really." Oscar Wilde walks among us.

Disappointingly, despite the seasonal setting, Hawkins and co. forgo the chance to bling up their show, and play a straight set with few festive trimmings beyond the inevitable rollicking encore of *Christmas Time (Don't Let The Bells End)*. More bespoke, imaginative tweaks for covid-era home viewers would have been welcome. That said, they do deliver scorching versions of vintage anthems including *Black Shuck* and *Growing On Me*, plus newer tracks such as the shrill, galloping (accidentally now prophetic) *Easter Is Cancelled*. Viewed on a big screen and through booming speakers, Streaming Of A White Christmas is obviously not the real rock gig experience, but it's still a pleasingly loud and gaudy simulation.

Stephen Dalton



The Soundtrack Of My Life

Producer and Garbage drummer **Butch Vig** on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to him.

Interview: **Emma Johnston**

Having produced some of the most significant albums of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, and also made his mark on the rock world with Garbage and more recently 5 Billion In Diamonds, it's fair to say that Butch Vig knows a thing or two about the magic that separates the good from the great in music. Calling in via Zoom from his home studio in Los Angeles, which is decorated with vintage tour posters from his heroes The Who, he shares his love of Led Zeppelin, his surprising passion for KC And The Sunshine Band, and the aural horror of his former punk band Rectal Drip.

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

I had a band in high school called Eclipse. The first song that we learned was *Smoke On The Water*. Everybody thinks it's played with simple bar chords. It's not. Richie Blackmore plays it a weird way. But our guitarists could barely play, so they were playing these power chords. But it would always get the crowd going. That riff is so monolithic.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

Who's Next by The Who. I saw The Who play on *The Smothers Brothers* show when I was twelve years old, and that's what got me into playing the drums. Up until that point I'd been playing piano. I saw Keith Moon and told my mom and dad: "I wanna do *that*." The sound, for a three-piece band, had this really widescreen sound to it.

THE GUITAR HERO

For me it would have to be Jimmy Page, because I love his melodic writing and his arpeggio playing. All of the records have the coolest guitar riffs. He may not be as super-fast, technically, as someone like Hendrix or Eddie Van Halen, but I think Page had a melodic sensibility. Also, he produced all those Led Zeppelin records.

THE BEST SINGER

If I could be a singer and inherit someone's voice, I'd say John Fogerty from Creedence Clearwater Revival. I love that rasp in his voice. He's got that scratchy roar in his throat, and I always wanted to be able to sing like that.

THE GENIUS SONGWRITER

I'm going to go with Pete Townshend, because I love The Who so much. I think he's an amazing songwriter. Jimmy Webb is a close second.

THE WORST RECORD I'VE MADE

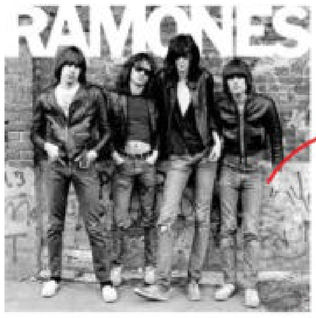
Hopefully you've never heard it. It's *Another Drop In The Bucket* by Rectal Drip. Steve Marker and I started recording these songs at Smart Studios when another session would cancel, and whoever was around would play on it with us. There are all these really fast punk songs, all the lyrics were not PC, not very listenable. Luckily it's out of print.

THE BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT

I am such a huge Radiohead fan. I love *The Bends* and I love, love, love *OK Computer*, but I was not a big fan of *Kid A*. It didn't connect with me. The songwriting on *The Bends* is genius. Then when I heard *Kid A* I was like: "Oh, okay, they've crawled up their own bums now, they're just getting artsy fartsy." And that's okay, I still have immense respect for them, they're an incredible band, but I thought they kinda lost the plot with that one. But I still love Radiohead. The last time they played here in Los Angeles I went and saw them and they blew my mind.

THE ULTIMATE ANTHEM

Bittersweet Symphony by The Verve. I love that song, with the strings swelling and it kicks into that groove. I love Richard Ashcroft's lyrics. I played that song at my wedding, I love it so much. That's one that I always wish I'd written.



SATURDAY NIGHT PARTY SONG

If I was going to see a show, I might play some music by the artist I was going to see, but more often than not if I was going out I would put on The Ramones' first album. It's one of my top-ten records of all time, it's a perfect punk rock record and it never fails to get me adrenalised. It's so primal and so simple, and so tight and energised, you can't help but wanna ramp it up.

THE GUILTY PLEASURE

When disco was happening, I really looked down on it because I was into punk rock. But looking back there's some brilliant disco songs that are so damn catchy and fun. When I hear KC And The Sunshine Band I've just got to groove, man, it's such amazing pop. It's party music. Total escapism.

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

Wichita Lineman, written by Jimmy Webb [a hit for Glen Campbell in '69]. It's one of the most perfect pop songs ever. The lyrics are so simple, about someone away from their loved one, and it's about loneliness and wanting. That line '*I need you more than want you, and I want you for all time*', that's one of the best lyrics ever written. Whenever I hear that song it chokes me up. Kills me every time.

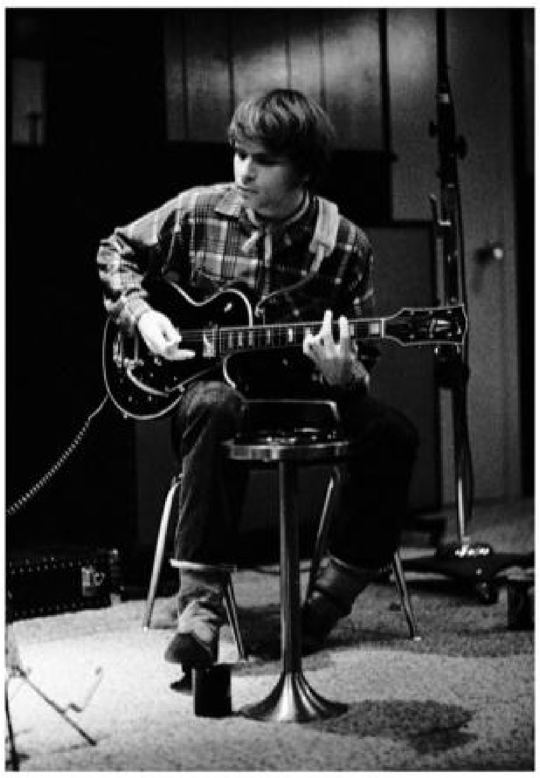
MY 'IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE' SONG

I love old soul and funk. I'm going to say Marvin Gaye, *Let's Get It On*. That's a classic. My wife would think I'm slightly corny if I put that on and started shimmying around the house, but she loves old funk and soul like that too.

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

In The Sun, a song by Joseph Arthur. Also a song I had played at my wedding and it's kind of a bummer song. Bummer songs just make me feel good. When I hear something sad it makes me feel alive.

Divine Accidents by 5 Billion In Diamonds is out now via Make Records.



"If I could be a singer and inherit someone's voice, I'd say John Fogerty."

BUTCH VIG: BO VIG/PESS; JOHN FOGERTY: GETTY

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